

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH 1, 1869.

ROLAND YORKE.

A SEQUEL TO "THE CHANNINGS."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

THE STORY.—CHAPTER VII.

IN THE OFFICE.

THE morning sun was shining on the house of Greatorex and Greatorex. It was a busy day in April. London was filling; people were flocking to town; the season was fairly inaugurated, the law courts were full of life.

The front door stood open; the inner door, closed, could be pushed back at will. It bore a brass plate with the inscription, "Greatorex and Greatorex, Solicitors," and it had a habit, this inner door, of swinging to upon clients' heels as they went out, for the spring was sharp. In the passage which the door closed in, was a room on either hand. The one on the left was inscribed outside, "Clerks' Office"; that on the right, "Mr. Bede Greatorex."

Mr. Bede Greatorex was in his room to-day: not his private room; that lay beyond. It was a moderate-sized apartment, the door in the middle, the fire-place opposite to it. On the right, between the door and the near window, was the desk of Mr. Brown; opposite to it, between the fire-place and far window, stood Mr. Bede Greatorex's desk; two longer desks ran along the walls towards the lower part of the room. At the one, in a line with that of Mr. Bede Greatorex, the fire-place being between them, sat Mr. Hurst, a gentleman who had entered the house for improvement; at the one on the other side the door, in a line with Mr. Brown's, sat little Jenner, a paid clerk. Sundry stools and chairs stood about; a huge map hung above the fire-place; a stone bottle of ink, some letter-scales, and various other articles more useful than ornamental, were on the mantle-shelf: altogether, the room was about as bare and dull as such offices usually are. The door

at the end, marked "Private," opened direct to the private room of Mr. Bede Greatorex, where he held consultations with clients.

And he generally sat there also. It was not very often that he came to his desk in the front office : but he chose to be there on occasions, and this was one. This side of the house was understood to comprise the department of Mr. Bede Greatorex ; some of the clients of the house were his exclusively ; that is, when they came they saw him, not his father ; and Mr. Brown was head-clerk and manager under him.

Bede Greatorex (called generally in the office, "Mr. Bede," in contradistinction to his father, Mr. Greatorex) sat looking over some papers taken out of his locked desk. Four years have gone by since you saw him last, reader ; for that prologue to the story with its sad event, was not enacted lately. And the four years have aged him. His father was wont to tell him that he had not got over the shock and grief of John Ollivera's death ; Bede's private opinion was that he never should get over it. They had been as close friends, as dear brothers ; and Bede had been a changed man since. Apart from this grief and regret, and the effect it might have left upon him, suspicions had also arisen latterly that Mr. Bede Greatorex's health was failing ; in short there were indications, fancied or real, that the inward complaint of which his mother died, might, unless great care were used, creep upon him. Bede had seen a physician, who would pronounce no very positive opinion, but believed on the whole that the fears were without foundation, certainly they were premature.

Another cause that tended to worry Mr. Bede Greatorex, lay in his domestic life. More than three years ago now, he had married Miss Joliffe ; and the world, given you know to put itself into everybody's business and whisper scandal of the best of us, said that in marrying her, Mr. Bede Greatorex had got his pill. She was wilful as the wind ; spent his money right and left ; ran him in debt ; plunged into gaiety, show, whirl, all of which her husband hated : she was in fact a perfect, grave exemplification of that undesirable but expressive term that threatens to become a household word in our once sober land—"fast." Three parts of Bede's life, the life that lay apart from his profession, his routine of office-duties, was spent in striving to keep from his father the extravagance of his wife, and the sums of money he had to draw for personal expenditure. Bede had chivalric ideas upon the point ; he had made her his wife, and would jealously have guarded her failings from all : he would have denied, had he been questioned, that she had any. So far as he was able he would indulge her whims and wishes ; but there was one of them that he could not and did not : and that related to their place of dwelling. Bede had brought his wife to the home that had been his mother's, to be its sole mistress in his late mother's place. It was a large, convenient, handsome residence (as was previously seen), replete with every comfort but after a time Mrs.

Bede Greateorex grew discontented. She wanted to be in a more fashionable quarter; Hyde Park, Belgrave Square; anywhere amidst the great world. After their marriage Bede had taken her abroad; and they remained so long that Mr. Greateorex began to indulge a private opinion that Bede was never coming back again. They sojourned in Paris, in Switzerland, in Germany; and though, when they at length did return, Bede laughingly said, he could not get Louisa home, he had in point of fact been as ready to linger away from it as she was. The Bedford Square house had been done up beautifully, and for two years Mrs. Bede found no fault with it; she had taken to do that lately, and it seemed to grow upon her like a mania.

Upstairs now, now at this very moment, when her husband is poring over his law-puzzles with bent brow, she is studying the advertisements of desirable houses in *The Times*, almost inclined to go out and take one on her own account. A charming one (to judge by the description) was to be had in Park Lane, rent only six hundred a year, unfurnished. Money was as plentiful as sand in the idea of Mrs. Bede Greateorex.

You can go and see her. Through the passages and the intervening door to the other house; or else go out into the street and make a call of state at the private entrance. Up the wide staircase to the handsome landing-place already told of, with its rich green carpet, its painted windows, its miniature conservatory, and its statues; on all of which the sun is shining as brightly as it was that other day four years ago, when Bede Greateorex came home, fresh from the unhappy scenes connected with the death of Mr. Ollivera. Not into the dining-room; there's no one in it; there's no one in the large and beautiful drawing-room; enter, first of all, a small apartment on the side that they call the study.

At the table sat Jane Greateorex, grown into a damsel of twelve, but exceedingly little and childlike in appearance. She was writing French dictation. By her side, speaking the words in a slow, distinct tone, with a good and pure accent, sat a young lady. Her face one of the sweetest it was ever man's lot to look upon. The hazel eyes were deep, honest, steady; the auburn hair lay lightly away from delicate and well-carved features; the complexion was pure and bright. A slender girl of middle height, and gentle, winning manners, whose simple morning dress of light cashmere sat well upon her.

Surely that modest, good, thoughtful young woman could not be Mrs. Bede Greateorex! No: you must wait yet an instant for introduction to her. That is only Miss Jane's governess, a young lady who has but recently entered on her duties as such, and is striving to perform them conscientiously. She is very patient, although the little girl is excessively tiresome, with a strong will of her own, and a decided objection to lessons of all kinds. She is the more patient because she remembers what a tiresome child she was herself, at that age, and the vast amount of trouble she gave wilfully to her sister-governess.

"No, Jane; it is not *facture*; it is *facteur*. We are speaking of a postman, you know. The two words are essentially different; different in meaning, in spelling, and in sound. I explained this to you yesterday."

"I don't like doing dictation, Miss Channing," came the answering response.

"Go on, please. Le facteur, qui ——"

"I'm tired to death. I know I've done a whole page."

"You have done three lines. One of these days I will give you a whole page to do, and then you'll know what a whole page is. Le facteur, qui arrive——"

Miss Jane Greatorex suddenly took a large penful of ink, and shook it deliberately on the copy-book. Leaving them to the contest, in which be you very sure the governess would conquer, for she was calm, kind, and firm, we will go to an opposite room, one that Mrs. Bede called her boudoir. A beautiful room, its paper and panelling of white and gold, its velvet carpet of delicate tints, its silk curtains of a soft rose-colour. But neither Mrs. Bede Greatorex, who sat there, nor her attire was in accordance with the room.

And, to say the truth, she had only come down from her chamber to get something left in it the night before: it was her favorite morning room, but Mrs. Bede was not wont to take up her position in it until made up for the day. And that was not yet accomplished. Her dark hair was untidy, her face pale and pasty, her dressing-gown, of a dull red with gold sprigs on it, sat loose. Seeing *The Times* on the table, she had caught it up, and thrown herself back in a reclining chair of satin-wood and pink velvet, while she looked over the advertisements. Mrs. Bede Greatorex was tall and showy, and there her beauty ended. As Louisa Joliffe, she had exercised a charm of manner that fascinated many, but she kept it for rare occasions now: and, they, always public ones. She had no children, and her whole life and being were wrapt in fashion, frivolity, and heartlessness. The graver duties of existence were wholly neglected by Louisa Greatorex: she seemed to live in ignorance that such things were. She never so much as glanced at the solemn thought that there must come a life after this life; she never for a moment strove to work on for it, or to help another: had she chosen to search her memory, it could not have returned to her the satisfaction of having ever performed a kind action.

One little specimen of her selfishness, her utter disregard for the claims and feelings of others, shall be given, for it occurred opportunely. As she sat, newspaper in hand, a young woman opened the door, and asked leave to speak to her. She was the lady's-maid, and, as Mrs. Bede looked at her, knitting her brow at the request, she saw tears stealing down from the petitioning eyes.

"Could you please let me go out, madam? A messenger has come to

say that my mother is taken suddenly worse: they think she is dying."

"You can go when I am dressed," replied Mrs. Bede Greatorex.

"Oh, madam, if you could please to let me go at once! I may not be in time to see her. Eliza says she will take my place this morning, if you will allow her."

"You can go when I am dressed," was the reiterated, cold, and decisive answer. "You hear me, Tallet. Shut the door." And the maid withdrew, her face working with its vain yearning.

"She's always wanting to go out to her mother," harshly spoke Mrs. Bede Greatorex, as she settled herself to the newspaper again.

"One; two; three; four; five. Five houses that seem desirable. Bede may say what he chooses! in this miserable old house, with its professional varnish, we don't stay. I'll write at once for particulars," she added, going to her writing-table, a costly piece of furniture, inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

It took her some little time, three-quarters of an hour about, and then she went up to be dressed, which occupied nearly an hour longer. Tallet might depart then. And thus you have a specimen of the goodness of heart of Louisa Greatorex.

But this has been a digression from the morning's business, and we must return to the husband, whose wish and will she would have liked to defy, and to the office where he sat. The room was very quiet; nothing to be heard in it but the scratching of three pens; Mr. Brown's, Mr. Hurst's, and Mr. Jenner's. This room was not entered indiscriminately by callers; the opposite door inscribed "Clerks' Office," was on the swing perpetually. This room was a very sedate one: as a matter of course so in the presence of Mr. Bede Greatorex; and the head of it in his absence, Mr. Brown, allowed no opportunity for discursive gossip. He was as efficient a clerk as Greatorex and Greatorex had ever possessed; young yet: a tall, slender, silent man, devoted to his business; about three years, or so, with them now. He wore a red wig; and his whiskers and the hair on his chin were sandy.

Bede Greatorex shut some papers into his desk with a click, and began opening another parchment. "Did you get an answer yesterday, from Garnett's people, Mr. Hurst?" he suddenly asked.

"No, sir. I could not see them."

"Their clerk came in last evening to say we should hear from them to-day," interposed Mr. Brown, looking up from his writing to speak.

It was in these moments—when the clerk's eyes unexpectedly met those of Mr. Bede Greatorex—that the latter would feel a kind of disagreeable sensation shoot over him. Over and over again had it occurred: the first time when Mr. Brown had been in the office but a day. They were standing talking together on that occasion, when a sudden fancy took Bede that he had seen the man somewhere before. It was

not to be called a recognition; but a kind of semi-recognition, vague, indefinite, uncertain, and accompanied by a disagreeable feeling, which had its rise perhaps in the very uncertainty.

"Have we ever met before?" Mr. Bede Greatorex had questioned; but Mr. Brown shook his head, and could not say. A hundred times since then, when he met the steady gaze of those remarkable light grey eyes (nearly always bent on their work), had Bede stealthily continued to study the man; but the puzzle was always there.

Mr. Brown's eyes and face were bent on his desk again to-day. His master, holding a sheet of parchment up before him, as if to study the writing better, suffered his gaze to wander over its top and fix itself on Mr. Brown. The clerk, happening to glance up unguardedly, caught it.

He was one of the most observant men living, quiet though he seemed, and could not fail to be aware that he was thus occasionally subjected to the scrutiny of his master—but he never appeared to see it.

"Did you speak, sir?" he asked, as if he had looked up to ask the question.

"I was about to speak," said Mr. Bede Greatorex. "There's a new clerk coming in to-day to replace Parkinson. Nine o'clock was the hour fixed, and now it is half-past ten. If this is a specimen of his habits of punctuality, I fear he'll not do much good. You will place him at Mr. Hurst's desk."

"Very good, sir," replied Mr. Brown, making no comment. The out-going clerk, Parkinson, had been at Jenner's.

"I am going over to Westminster," continued Mr. Bede Greatorex, gathering some papers in his hand. "If Garnett's people come in, they must wait for me. By the way, what about that deed——"

The words were cut short by a clatter. A clatter and hustle of feet and doors; some one was dashing in from the street in a desperate hurry, with a vast deal of unnecessary noise. First the swing-door gave a bang, then the clerks' door opened and banged; now this one was sent back with a breeze; and a tall fine-looking young man came bustling in, head foremost—Mr. Roland Yorke.

Not so very young, either. For seven years have elapsed since he was of age, and went careering off on a certain hopeful voyage of his to Port Natal, told of in history. He is changed since then. The overgrown young fellow of twenty-one, angular and awkward, has become quite a noble-looking man in his great strength and height. The face is a fine one, good-nature the predominant expression of the somewhat rough features, which are pale and clear and healthy: the indecision that might once have been detected in his countenance, has given place to earnestness now. Of regular beauty in his face, as many people count beauty, there is none; but you would scarcely pass him in the street without turning to look at him. In manner he is nearly as much



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Roland Yorke's first appearance in the office of Greatorex and Greatorex.

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of a boy as a grown man can be, just as he ever was, hasty, thoughtless, and impulsive.

"I know I'm late," he began. "How d'ye do, Mr. Greatorex?"

"Yes, you are late, Mr. Yorke," was the response of Mr. Bede Greatorex, submitting to the hearty hand-shake offered. "Nine was the hour named."

"It was the boat's fault," returned Roland, speaking with loud independence, just as he might had he been a ten thousand a-year client of the house. I went down to see Carrick off at eight o'clock, and if you'll believe me, the vessel never got away before ten. They were putting horses on board. Carrick says they'll lose their tide over yonder; but he didn't complain, he's as easy as an old shoe. Since then I've had a pitch out of a hansom cab."

"Indeed!"

"I told the fellow to drive like mad; which he did; and down went the horse, and I out a-top of him, and the man a-top of me. There was no damage, only it all served to hinder. But I'm ready for work now, Mr. Greatorex. Which is to be my place?"

To witness a new clerk announce himself in this loud, familiar kind of way, to see him grasp and shake the hand of Mr. Bede Greatorex: above all to hear him speak unceremoniously of the Earl of Carrick, one of the house's noble clients, as if the two were hail-fellow-well-met, caused the whole office to look up, even work-absorbed Mr. Brown. Bede Greatorex indicated the appointed desk.

"This is where you will be, by the side of Mr. Hurst, a gentleman who is with us for improvement. Mr. Brown, the manager in this room"—pointing out the clerk with the end of his pen—"will assign you your work. Mr. Hurst, Mr. Roland Yorke."

Roland took his seat at once, and turned up his coat-cuffs as a preliminary step to industry. Mr. Bede Greatorex, saying no more, passed through to his private room, and after a minute was heard to go out.

"What's to do?" asked Roland.

Mr. Brown was already giving him something; a deed to be copied. He spoke a few instructions in a concise, quiet tone, and Roland set to work.

"What ink d'ye call this?" began Roland.

"It is the proper ink," said Mr. Brown.

"It's uncommon bad."

"Have you ever been used to the kind of work, Mr. Yorke?" enquired the manager, wondering whether the new comer might be a qualified solicitor, brought to grief, or a gentleman-embryo just entering on his noviciate.

"Oh, haven't I!" returned Mr. Yorke, "I was in a proctor's office once, where I was worked to death."

"Then you'll soon find that to be good ink."

"I had all the care of the office on my shoulders," resumed Roland, holding the pen in the air, and sitting back on his stool while he addressed Mr. Brown. "There were three of us in the place altogether, not counting the old proctor himself, and we had enough work for six. Well, circumstances occurred to take the other two out of it, and I, who was left, had to do it all. What do you think of that?"

Mr. Brown did not say what he thought. He was writing steadily, giving no encouragement for the continuance of the conversation. Mr. Hurst, his elbow on the desk, had his face turned to the speaker, surveying him at leisure.

"I couldn't stand it; I should have been in my grave in no time; and so I thought I'd try a part of the world that might be more desirable—Port Natal. I say, what are you staring at?"

This was to Mr. Hurst. The latter dropped his elbow as he answered.

"I was looking whether you were much altered. You are: and yet I think I should have known you, after a bit, for Roland Yorke. When the name was mentioned I might have been at fault but for your speaking of Lord Carrick."

"He's my uncle," said Roland. "Who are you?"

"Jos Hurst, from Helstonleigh. Have you forgotten me? I was at the college school with your brothers, Gerald and Tod."

Roland stared. He had not forgotten Josiah Hurst; but the rather short and very broad young man by his side, as broad as he was high, bore no resemblance to the once slim college boy. Roland never doubted: he got off his stool, upsetting it in the process, to shake heartily the meeting hand. Mr. Brown began to think the quiet of the office would not be much enhanced through its new inmate.

"My goodness! you are the first of the old fellows I've seen. And what are you, Hurst,—a lawyer?"

"Yes; I've passed. But the old doctor (at home, you know) won't buy me a practice, or let me set up for myself, or anything, until I've had some experience: and so I have come to Greatorex and Greatorex to get it," concluded Mr. Hurst, ruefully.

"And who's he?" continued Roland, pointing to Jenner. "Greatorex said nothing about him."

He was one of the least men ever seen, but he had a vast amount of work in him. Mr. Hurst explained that Jenner was only a clerk, but a very efficient one.

"He'd do twice the amount of work that I could, Yorke: I'm slow and sure; Jenner is sure and quick. How long have you been home from Port Natal?"

"Don't bother about that now," said Roland.

"Did you make your fortune out there?"

"What a senseless question! If I'd made a fortune there, it stands to reason I should not have to come into an office here."

"How was I to know? You might have made a fortune and dissipated it?"

"Dissipated it in what?" cried Roland, with wide-open eyes. And to Mr. Hurst, who had gained some knowledge of what is called life, the look and the question bore earnest that Roland Yorke, in spite of his travelling experiences, was not much tainted by the world and its ways.

"Oh, in many things. Horse-racing, for instance."

Roland threw back his head in the old emphatic manner. "If ever I *do* get a fortune, Jos,—which appears about as likely as that Port Natal and Ireland should join hands and spin a waltz with each other—I'll take care of it."

Possibly in the notion occurring to him that idleness was certainly not the best way to acquire a fortune, Roland tilted his stool on its even legs, and began to work in earnest. When he had accomplished two lines, he took it to the manager.

"Will this do, Mr. Brown? I'm rather out of practice."

Mr. Brown signified that it would. He knew his business better than to give anything of much consequence to an unknown and untried clerk.

"Are you related to Sir Richard Yorke?" he asked of Roland.

"Yes, I am: and I'm ashamed of him. Old Dick's my uncle, my late father's brother; and his son and heir, young Dick, is my cousin. Old Dick is the greatest screw alive; he'd not help a fellow to save him from hanging. He's as poor as Carrick; but I don't call that an excuse for him; his estate is mortgaged up the neck."

Mr. Brown needed not the additional information, which Roland proffered so candidly. His nature had not changed a whit. Nay, perhaps the free and easy life at Port Natal, about which we may hear somewhat later, had only tended to render him less reticent, if that were possible. Greatorex and Greatorex were the confidential solicitors to Sir Richard Yorke, and Mr. Brown was better acquainted than Roland with the baronet's finances.

"I thought it must be so," remarked Mr. Brown. "I knew there was some connection between Sir Richard and Lord Carrick. Are you likely to stay in our office long?" he questioned, inwardly wondering that Roland with two uncles so puissant should be there at all.

"I'm likely to stay for ever, for all I know. They are going to give me twenty shillings a week. I say, Mr. Brown, why do you wear a wig?"

Doubtless Mr. Brown thought the question a tolerably pointed one upon so brief an acquaintance. He settled to his work again without answering it. A hint that the clerk just come under his wing might return and settle to his. Which was not taken.

"My hair is as plentiful as ever it was," said Roland, giving his dark

hair a push backwards. "I don't want a wig: and you can't be so very much my senior; six or seven years, perhaps. I'm eight-and-twenty."

"And I am five-and-thirty, sir. My hair came off in a fever a few years back and it does not grow again. Be so good as to get on with what you have to do, Mr. Yorke."

Thus admonished, Roland obediently sought his place. And what with renewed questions to Mr. Brown—that came ringing out at the most unexpected moments—what with a few anecdotes of life at Port Natal with which he confidentially regaled Mr. Hurst, what with making the acquaintance of little Jenner, which Roland accomplished with great affability, and what with slight interludes of writing, a line here and a line there, the morning wore away agreeably.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVAL FROM PORT NATAL.

MR. ROLAND YORKE'S emigration to Port Natal cannot be said to have turned out a success. He had gone off in high spirits, a chief cabin passenger, Lord Carrick having paid the passage-money, forty pounds. He had carried with him, from the same good-natured source, fifty pounds, to begin life with when he should land, a small but sufficient outfit, and a case of merchandize consisting of frying-pans. Seven years before, when Roland resolved to emigrate and run away from work at home, he became imbued with the conviction (whence derived he scarcely knew, but it lay on his mind as a positive certainty) that frying-pans formed the best and most staple article on which to commence trading at Port Natal, invariably laying the foundation of a fortune. Some friend of his, a Mr. Bagshaw, who had previously emigrated, had imparted this secret to him; at least Roland was impressed with the belief that he had, a belief which nothing could shake. Frying-pans and fortune were associated together in his dreams. He had stood out strongly for the taking out forty dozen, but Lord Carrick declined to furnish them, allowing only the miserable number of four-and-twenty. "When ye see for ye'reself out there that there's a market for them, send me word, and I'll dispatch loads to ye by the first steamer, me boy," said his lordship sensibly; and Roland was fain to put up with the advice and with the two dozen accorded. He arrived at Port Natal all youth and joy and buoyancy. Seen from the deck of the vessel, when she anchored in the beautiful harbour, calm as a lake, Natal looked like a very paradise. Ranges of hills on the west of the fair town were dotted with charming houses and pleasure-grounds; and Roland landed fresh and full of hope as a summer's morning: just as

too many an emigrant from the dear old mother-country does land, at other parts besides Natal. And he bought experience as they do.

In the first place Roland began life there as had been accustomed to it in England; that is, as a gentleman. In the second place there proved to be no especial market for frying-pans. That useful culinary article might be bought in sufficient abundance, he found, when inquired for, without bringing into requisition the newly-arrived supply. The frying-pans being thus left upon his hands, lying like a dead weight on them, metaphorically speaking, brought the first check to his hopes; for they had been relied upon (as the world knows) to inaugurate and establish the great enterprizes, commercial or otherwise, that had floated in rose-coloured visions through Roland's brain. He quitted the port town, Durban, and went to Maritzburg, fifty miles off, and then came back to Durban. Thrown upon his own resources (through the failure of the frying-pans), Roland had leisure to look about him, for some other fertile source in which to embark his genius and energy, and lead him on to speedy fortune. Such sources did not appear to be going begging; they were coyly shy; or at least came not flowing in Roland's way; and meanwhile his money melted. Partly in foolish expenditure on his own account, partly in helping sundry poor wights, distressed steerage passengers with whom he had made acquaintance on board (for Roland had brought out his good-nature with him) the money came to a summary end. One fine morning, Roland woke up from a dream of idle carelessness, to find himself changing the last sovereign of all the fifty. It did not dismay him very much: all he said was, "I must set about money-making in earnest now."

Of course the great problem was—how to do it. You, my reader, may be, even now, trying to solve it. Thousands of us are, every day. Roland Yorke made but one more of a very common experience; and he had to encounter the usual rubs incidental to the process. He came to great grief and was reduced to a crust; nay, to the not knowing where the crust could be picked up from. The frying-pans went first, disposed of in a job lot, almost literally for an old song. Some man who owned a shed had, for a consideration, housed the case that contained them, and they were eating their handles off. Roland's wardrobe went next, piecemeal; and things fell to the pass that Roland was not sure but he himself would have to go after it. It came to one of two things—starvation or work. To do Roland justice, he was ready and willing to work; but he knew no mechanical trade, he had never done an hour's hard labour, and in that lay the difficulty of getting it. He would rush about from office to store, hunger giving him earnestness, from store to workshop, from workshop to bench, and say Employ me. For the most part, the answer would be that he was not wanted; the labour market of all kinds was overstocked; but if the application appeared, by rare chance, likely to be entertained, and Roland was

questioned of his experience and capabilities, rejection was sure to follow. He was too honest, too shallow in the matter of tact, to say he had been accustomed to work when he had not; and the experience in writing which he acknowledged and put forth, was somehow never required to be tested. To hear Roland tell of what he had accomplished in this line at home, must have astonished the natives of Port Natal.

Well, time went on, it does not stand still for any one, and Roland went on with it, down and down and down. Years went on; and one rainy day, when about four winters had gone by from the date of his departure, Roland returned to England. He landed in St. Katharine's Docks, his coat out at elbows and ninepence in his pocket: as an old friend of his, Mr. Galloway, had once prophesied he would land, if he lived to get back at all.

Mr. Roland Yorke had sailed for Port Natal in style, a first-class cabin passenger; he came home in the steerage, paying £12 for the passage, and working out part of that. From thence he made his way to Lord Carrick in Ireland, very much like a bale of returned goods.

The best account he gave of his travels to Lord Carrick, perhaps the best account he could give, was that he had been "knocking about." Luck had not been with him, he said: and there really did seem to have been a good deal in that. To hear him tell of his adventures was something rich; not consecutively as a history, he never did that: but these chance recollections were so frequent and diffuse, that a history of his career at Natal might have been compiled from them. The Earl would hold his sides, laughing at Roland's lamentations for the failure and sacrifice of his frying-pans, and at the reminiscences in general. A life of adventure one week, a life of starvation the next. Roland said he had tried all kinds of things. He had served in stores; at bars where liquor was dispensed; he had been a hired waiter at half the hotels in Natal; he had worked on the shore with the half-naked Zulu Kaffirs at lading and unlading boats; once, for a whole week, when he was very hard up, or perhaps very low *down*, he had cried hot potatoes in the streets. He had been a farmer's labourer and driven a waggon, pigs, and cattle. He had been sub-editor in a newspaper office, *The Natal Mercury*, and one unlucky day sent the journal out with its letters printed upside down. He had hired himself out as chemist's assistant, and half ruined his master by his hopeless inability to distinguish between senna and tincture of laudanum, so that the antidotes obliged to be supplied to the hapless customers who came rushing for them, quite outweighed the profits. Occasionally he had met with friends who assisted him, and then Roland was at ease—for his propensity to live as a gentleman was for ever cropping up. Up and down; down and up; now fortune smiling a little, but for the most part showing herself very grim, and frowning terribly. Roland had gone (as he called it) up the country, and amidst

other agreeable incidents came to a fight with the Kaffirs. He took out a licence, the cost thirty shillings, and opened a retail store for pickled pork, candles, and native leeches, the only articles he could get supplied him on trust. His fine personal appearance, ready address, evident scholarship, and hearty, frank manners obtained for him a clerkship in the Commercial and Agricultural Bank, recently opened, and he got into so hopeless a maze with the books and cash by the week's end, that he was turned off without pay. Architecture was tried next. Roland sent in a graphic plan as competitor for the erection of a public building: and the drawing, which he had copied from a model, just as he used to copy cribs in the college school at Helstonleigh, looked so well upon paper that the arbitrators were struck with admiration at the constructive talent displayed, until one of them made the abrupt discovery that there were no staircases and no room left to build any. So, that hope was abandoned for a less exalted one; and Roland was glad to become young man at a general store, where the work was light: alternating between dispensing red herrings and treacle (called there golden syrup) to customers over the counter, and taking out parcels in a wheelbarrow.

But there was good in Roland. And a great deal of it too, in spite of his ill-luck and his careless improvidence. The very fact of his remaining away four years, striving manfully with this unsatisfactory life of toil and semi-starvation, proved it. The brown bread and pea-soup Mr. Galloway had foreseen he would be reduced to live on, was often hungered for by Roland in vain. He put up with it all; and not until every chance seemed to have failed, would he go home to tax his uncle's pocket, and to disappoint his mother. A sense of shame, of keen, stinging mortification, no doubt lay at the bottom of this feeling against return. He had been so sanguine; as some of my readers may remember; and as he, sitting one day on a roadside stone in the sand, towards the close of his stay in Natal, recalled; so full of hopeful, glowing visions in the old home, that his mother, the Lady Augusta Yorke, had caught their reflection. Roland's castles in the air cannot have slipped yet quite out of people's memory. He had represented to his mother; aye, and believed it, too; that Port Natal was a kind of Spanish *El dorado*, where energetic young men might line their pockets in a short while, and come home millionnaires for life. He had indulged large visions and made magnificent promises on the strength of them; beginning with a case of diamonds to his mother; and ending, nobody but Roland could have any conception where. Old debts were to be paid, friends benefitted, enemies made to eat humble-pie. Mr. Galloway was to be passed in the street by Mr. Roland Yorke, the millionaire; the Reverend William Yorke to have the cold shoulder turned upon him. Arthur Channing was to be honoured; Jenkins, the hard-working clerk, who had thought nothing of doing Roland's work as well as his own, to

be largely patronized; within three months after his arrival in Port Natal, funds were to be despatched home, to settle claims that might be standing against Roland in Helstonleigh. That there could be the slightest doubt he should come back "worth millions," Roland never supposed; he had talked of it everywhere—and talked faithfully. Poor Jenkins had long gone where worldly patronage and gifts could not follow him, but others had not. Roland remembered how his confident anticipations had so won upon his mother that she went to bed and dreamt of driving about a charming city, whose streets were paved with Malachite marble.

And so, recalling these visions and promises, Roland, for very disappointment and shame, was not in a hurry to go back, but rather lingered on in Port Natal, struggling manfully with his ill-luck, as he called it. Pride and good-feeling alike prevented him. To appear before Lady Augusta, poor, starving, hatless and bootless, would be undoubtedly a worse blow to her than that other alternative which he had laid before her view: the one, he said, might happen if he did *not* get to Port Natal—the riding as a jockey on Helstonleigh race-course, in a pink silk jacket and yellow breeches.

No. He did try heartily with all his might and main; tried at it for four mortal years. Beyond a scrap of writing he now and again sent home, in which he always said he was "well, and happy, and keeping straight, and getting on," but which never contained a request for home news or an address to which it might be sent, Lady Augusta heard nothing. Nobody else heard. One letter indeed reached a bosom-friend of his, Arthur Channing, which was burnt when read, as requested, and Arthur looked grieved for a month after. He had told Arthur the truth; that he was not getting on; but under an injunction of secrecy, and giving no details. Beyond that, no news reached home of Roland.

His fourth year of trial at Port Natal was drawing to a close when illness seized hold of him, and for the first time Roland felt as if he were losing heart. It was not serious illness, only such as is apt to attack visitors to the country, and from which Roland's strength of frame, sound constitution, and good habits—for he had no bad ones, unless a great appetite might be called such—had hitherto preserved him. But, what with the wear and tear of his chequered life; its uncertain food; a plentiful dinner to-day, bread and beans to-morrow, nothing the following one; and its harassing and continuous disappointments, Roland felt the illness as a depressing calamity; and he began to say he could not make head against the tide any longer, and must get away from it. He might have to eat humble-pie on landing in England; but humble-pie seems tolerable or nauseous according to the existing state of mind: and it is never utterly poisonous to one of the elastic temperament of Roland Yorke. In a fit of impulse he went down to the ships and made the best bargain for getting home that circumstances allowed. He had been

away four years ; and never once, during that time, had he written home for money.

And so, behold him, out at pocket (except for ninepence) and out at elbows, but wonderfully improved in tone and physique, arriving early one rainy morning from Port Natal, and landing in the docks.

The first thing he did was to divide the ninepence with one who was poorer than he ; the second was to get a cup of coffee and a slice of bread at a street coffee-stall ; the third was to hasten to Lord Carrick's tailor—and a tremendous walk it was ; but that was nothing to Roland—and get rigged out in any second-hand suit of clothes returned on hand that might be decent. There ill news awaited him : it was the time of year when Lord Carrick might, as a rule, be found in London ; but he had not come : he was, the tailor believed, in Ireland. Roland at once knew, as sure as though it had been told him, that his uncle was in some kind of pecuniary hot water. Borrowing the very smallest amount of money that would take him to Ireland, he went off down the Thames in a return cattle-boat that very day.

Since that period, hard upon three years, he had been almost equally "knocking about," and experienced nearly as many ups and downs as at Port Natal. Sometimes living in clover with Lord Carrick, at others thrown on his own resources and getting on somehow. Lord Carrick's will was good to help him, but not always his ability : now and again it had happened that his lordship (who was really more improvident than his nephew, and had to take flights to the Continent on abrupt emergencies and without a day's warning) was lost to society for a time, even to Roland. Roland hired himself out as a kind of overlooker to some absentee's estate, but he could not get paid for it. This part of his career need not be traced ; on the whole, he did still strive to do something for himself as strenuously as he had at Port Natal, and not to be a burthen to anybody, even to Lord Carrick.

To this end he came one day over to London, and presented himself to his late father's brother, Sir Richard Yorke, and boldly asked him if he could not "put him into something." The request caused Sir Richard (an old gentleman with a fat face) to stare immensely ; he was very poor and very selfish, and had persistently held himself aloof from his late brother's needy family, keeping them always at arm's length. His son and heir had been content to do the same : in truth, the cousins did not know each other by sight. Sir Richard's estate was worth four thousand a year, all told ; and as he was wont to live at the rate of six, it will be understood that he was never in funds. Neither had he patronage or influence in any way. To be thus summarily applied to by a stalwart young man, who announced himself as his nephew, took the baronet aback ; and if he did not exactly turn Roland out of the house, his behaviour was equivalent to it. "I'll be shot if I ever go near him again," cried Roland. "I'd rather cry hot pies in Poplar streets."

A day or two previously, in sauntering about parts of London least frequented by men of the higher class—for when we are very much down in the world we don't exactly choose the region of St. James's for our promenades, or the sunny side of Regent Street—Roland had accidentally met one of the steerage passengers with whom he had voyaged home from Port Natal. Ever open-hearted, he had frankly avowed the reason of being unable to treat his friend; namely, empty pockets: he was not sure, he added, but he must take to crossing-sweeping for a living; he heard folks made fortunes at it. Upon this the gentleman, who wore no coat and very indifferent pantaloons, confided to him the intelligence that there was a first-rate opening in the perambulating hot-pie trade, down in Poplar, for an energetic young man with a sonorous voice. Roland being great in the latter gift, thought he might entertain it.

Things were at a low ebb just then with Roland. Lord Carrick, as usual, was totally destitute of ready money; and Roland, desperately anxious though he was to get along of his own accord, was fain to write to his mother for a little temporary help. One cannot live upon air in London, however that desirable state of things may be accomplished in Ireland. But the application was made at an inopportune moment. Every individual boy Lady Augusta possessed was then tugging at her purse-strings; and she returned a sharp answer to Roland, telling him he ought to be ashamed of himself not to be helping her, now that he was the eldest, instead of wanting her to keep him. George, the eldest son, had died in India, which brought Roland first. "It's true," said Roland, in a reflective mood, "I ought to be helping her. I wonder if Carrick could put me into anything, as old Dick won't. Once let me get a start, I'm bound to go on, and the mother should be the first to benefit by it."

A short while after this, and when Roland was far more at his wits' end for a shilling than he had ever been at Port Natal—for there he had no appearance to keep up, and here he had; there he could encamp out in the sand, here he couldn't—Lord Carrick arrived suddenly in London, in a little trouble as usual. Some warm-hearted friend had induced his good-natured lordship to accept a short bill, and afterwards treacherously left him to meet it. So Lord Carrick was again en route for the Continent, until his men of business, Greatorex and Greatorex, could arrange the affair for him by finding the necessary money. Halting in London a couple of days, to confer with them on that and other matters—for Lord Carrick's affairs altogether were complicated and could not be touched upon in an hour—Roland seized on the opportunity to prefer the application. And this brings us to the present time.

When under a cloud, and not quite certain that the streets were safe, the Earl was wont to eschew his hotel at the west end, and put up at a private one in a more obscure part. Roland, having had notice of his

arrival, clattered in to breakfast with him on the morning of the second day, and entered on his petition forthwith—to be put into something.

“Anything for a start, Uncle Carrick,” he urged. “No matter how low I begin; I’ll soon go along swimmingly, once I get the start. I can’t go about here, you know, with my toes out, as I have over yonder. It’s awful work getting a dinner only once a week. I’ve had thoughts of crying hot pies in Poplar.”

To judge by the breakfast Roland was eating, he had been a week without that meal as well as dinner. Lord Carrick, looking at the appetite with admiration, sat pulling his white whiskers in perplexity; for the grey hair of seven years ago had become white now. His heart was good to give Roland the post of Prime Minister, or any other trifling office, but he did not see his way clear to accomplish it.

“Me boy, there’s only one thing I can do for ye just now,” he said after silently turning the matter about in all its bearings, and hearing the explanation of the Poplar project. “Ye know I must be off to-morrow by the early French steamer, and I can’t go about looking after places to-day, even if I knew where they could be picked up, which I don’t. I must leave ye to Greateorex and Greateorex.”

“What will they do?” asked Roland.

“You can come along with me there, and see.”

Accordingly, when the Earl of Carrick went forth to his appointed interview that day with Mr. Greateorex, he presented Roland; and simply told the old lawyer that he must put him in a way of getting along, until he, Lord Carrick, was in funds again. Candid and open as ever Roland could be, the Earl made no secret whatever of that gentleman’s penniless state, enlarging on the fact that to go dinnerless, as a rule, could not be good for him, and that he should not exactly like to see him set up as a hot-pie man in Poplar. Mr. Greateorex, perhaps nearly as much taken to as Sir Richard Yorke had been on a similar occasion, glanced at his son Bede who was present, and hesitated. He did not refuse point-blank—as he might have done by almost anybody else. Lord Carrick was a valuable client, his business yearly bringing in a good share of leathers to the Greateorex nest, and old Mr. Greateorex was sensible of the fact. Still, he did not see what he could do for one who, like Roland, was in the somewhat anomalous position of being nephew to an earl and a baronet, but reduced to contemplate the embarking in the hot-pie trade.

“We might give him a stool in our office, Lord Carrick, for it happens that we are a clerk short: and pay him—pay him—twenty shillings a week. As a temporary thing, of course.”

To one who had not had a dinner for days, twenty shillings a week seems an ample fortune; and Roland started up and grasped the elder lawyer’s hand.

"I'll earn it," he said, his tone and eyes alike beaming with gratitude. "I'll work for you till I drop."

Mr. Greatorex smiled. "The work will not be difficult, Mr. Yorke; writing, and going on errands occasionally. If you do come," he pointedly added, "you must be ready to perform anything you may be directed to do, just as a regular clerk does."

"Ready and willing too," responded Roland."

"We have room for a certain number of clerks only," proceeded Mr. Greatorex, who was desirous that there should be no misunderstanding in the bargain; "each one has his appointed work and must get through it. Can you copy deeds?"

"*Can't I*," unceremoniously replied Roland. "I was nearly worked to death with old Galloway, of Helstonleigh."

"Were you ever with him?" cried Mr. Greatorex in surprise, to whom Mr. Galloway was known.

"Yes, for years; and part of the time had all the care of the office on my shoulders," was Roland's ready answer. "There was only Galloway then, beside myself, and *he* was not good for much. Why! the amount of copying I had to do was so great, I thought I should have dropped into my grave.. Lord Carrick knows it."

Lord Carrick did, in so far as that he had heard Roland repeatedly assert it, and nodded assent. Mr. Greatorex thought the services of so experienced a clerk must be invaluable to any house, and felt charmed to have secured them.

And that is how it arose that Roland Yorke, as you have seen, was entering the office of Greatorex and Greatorex. He was to be a clerk there to all intents and purposes; just as he had been in the old days at Mr. Galloway's; and yet, when he came in, that morning, after his summons out of the hansom cab, with a five-pound note in his pocket that Lord Carrick had contrived to spare for him, and an order for unlimited credit at his lordship's tailor's and bootmaker's, Roland's buoyant heart and fate were alike radiant, as if he had suddenly come into a fortune.

CHAPTER IX.

UNEXPECTED MEETINGS.

"You can go to your dinner, Mr. Yorke."

The clocks were striking one, as Brown, the manager, gave the semi-order. Roland, to whom dinner was an agreeable interlude, especially under the circumstances of having money in his pocket to pay for it, leaped off his stool forthwith, and caught up his hat.

"Are you not coming, Hurst?"

Mr. Hurst shook his head. "Little Jenner goes now. I stay until he comes back."

Little Jenner had been making preparation to go of his own accord, brushing his hat, drawing down his waistcoat, pushing gingerly in order his mass of soft fair hair. He was remarkably small; and these very small men are often very great dandies. Roland, who had shaken off the old pride in his rubs with the world, waited for him outside.

"Jenner, d'ye know of a good dining-place about here?" he asked, as they stood together, looking like a giant and a dwarf.

The clerk hesitated whether to say he did or did not. The place that he considered good might not appear so to the nephew of Sir Richard Yorke.

"I generally go to a house in Tottenham Court Road, sir. It's a kind of cookshop, clean, and the meat excellent; but one sees all kinds of people there, and you may not think it up to you."

"Law, bless you!" cried Roland. "When a fellow has been knocked about for four years in the streets at Port Natal, he doesn't retain much ceremony. Let's get on to it. Do you know of any lodgings to be let in these parts, Jenner?" he continued again. "I shall get some as near to Greatorex's as I can. One does not want a three or four miles' dance night and morning."

Jenner said he did not know of any, but would help Mr. Yorke to look for some that evening if he liked. And they had turned into Tottenham Court Road, when Jenner halted to speak to some one he encountered: a little woman, very dark, who was bustling by with a black and white flat basket in her hand.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Jones. How's Mr. Ollivera?"

"Now I've not got the time to stand bothering with you, Jenner," was the tart retort. "Call in any evening you like, as I've told you before; but I'm up to my eyes in errands now."

Roland Yorke, whose attention had been attracted to something in a shop-window, wheeled round on his heel at the voice, and stared at the speaker. Jenner had called her Mrs. Jones; but Roland fully believed no person in the world could own that voice, save one. A voice that struck on every chord of his memory, as connected with Helstonleigh.

"It *is* Mrs. Jenkins!" cried Roland, seizing the stranger's hands. "What on earth does he mean by calling you Mrs. Jones?"

"Ah," she groaned, "I am Mrs. Jones, more's the shame and pity. Let it pass for now, young Mr. Yorke. I should have known you anywhere."

"You don't mean to say you are living in London?" returned Roland.

"Yes, I am. In Gower Street. Come and see me, Mr. Yorke; Jenner will show you the house. Did you make your fortune at Port

Natal? You'd always used to be telling Jenkins, you know, that you should."

"And I thought I *should*," said Roland, with emphasis; "but I got no luck, and it turned out a failure. *Won't* I come and see you! I say, Mrs. Jenkins, do you remember the toasted muffins that Jenkins wouldn't eat?"

Mrs. Jones nodded twice to the reminiscence. She went bustling on her way, and they on theirs. Roland for once was rather silent. Mingling with the satisfaction he experienced in meeting any one from Helstonleigh, especially one so associated with the old familiar daily life as Mrs. Jenkins had been, came the thoughts of the years since; of their defeats and failures; of the mortification that invariably lay on his heart when he had to tell of them and of what they had brought him. He had now met two of the old people in one day; Hurst and Mrs. Jones; or, as Roland still called her, Mrs. Jenkins. Cords would not have dragged Roland to Helstonleigh: his mother, with the rest of them at home, had come over to Ireland to stay part of the summer at Lord Carrick's, soon after Roland's return from Port Natal; but he would not go to see them at the old home city. With the exception of scraps of news learnt from Hurst that day, Roland knew nothing about Helstonleigh's later years.

"Look here, Jenner! What brings her name Jones? It used to be Jenkins."

"I think I have heard that it was Jenkins once," replied Jenner, reflectively. "She must have married Jones after Jenkins died. Did you know him?"

"Did I know him?" echoed Roland, to whom the question sounded a very superfluous one. "I should just think I did know him. Why, he was chief clerk for years to Galloway, that cantankerous old proctor I was with. Jenkins was a good fellow as ever lived, meek and patient, and of course Mrs. J. put upon him. She'd not allow him to have his will in the smallest way: he couldn't dress himself in a morning unless she chose to let him, which she didn't always."

"Not let him dress himself?"

"It's true," affirmed Roland, diving down into the depth of the old grievances. "Our office was in an awful state of work at that time; and because Jenkins had a cough she'd lock up his pantaloons to keep him at home. It wasn't his fault: he'd have come in his coffin. Jones, whoever he may be, must have had the courage of a wolf to venture on her. Does he look like one?"

"I never saw him," said Jenner. "I think he's dead, too."

"Couldn't stand it, I suppose? My opinion is, it was her tongue took off poor Jenkins. He was mild as honey. Not that she's a bad lot at bottom, mind you, Jenner. I wonder what brought her to London?"

"I don't know anything about her affairs," said Jenner. "The Rev.

Henry William Ollivera has his rooms in her house, and I go to see him now and then. That's all."

"Who is the Rev. Henry William Ollivera?"

"Curate of a parish hard by. His brother, a barrister, had chambers in Lincoln's Inn, and I was his clerk. Four years ago he went the Oxford circuit, and came to his death at Helstonleigh. It was a shocking affair, and happened in the Jones's house. They lived at Helstonleigh then. Mrs. Jones's sister went in one morning and found him dead in his chair."

"My goodness!" cried Roland. "Was it a fit?"

"Worse than that. He took away his own life. And I have never been able to understand it from that hour to this, for he was the most unlikely man living to do such a thing—as people all said. The Greatorex interested themselves to get me a fresh place, giving me some temporary work in their office. It ended in my remaining with them. They find me useful and pay me well. It's four years now, sir, since it happened."

"Just one year before I got home from Natal," casually remarked Roland.

"He sends for me sometimes," continued Mr. Jenner, pursuing his own thoughts, which were running on the clergyman. "When any fresh idea occurs to him, he'll write off for me, post-haste: and when I get there puts all sorts of questions to me, about the old times in Lincoln's Inn. You see, he has always held that Mr. Ollivera did not kill himself, and has been ever since trying to get evidence to prove he did not. The hope never seems to grow old with him, or to rest; it is as fresh and near as it was the day he first took it up."

Roland felt a little puzzled. "Did Mr. Ollivera kill himself, or didn't he? Which do you mean?"

Jenner shook his head. "I think he did, unlikely though it seemed. All the circumstances proved it, and nobody doubted it except the Rev. Mr. Ollivera. Bede Greatorex, who was the last person to see him alive, thinks there can be no doubt whatever; I overheard him say it was just one of William Ollivera's crotchets, and not the first by a good many that he had taken up. The clergyman used to be for ever coming into the office talking of it, saying should he do this or do the other, until Bede told him he couldn't have it; that it interrupted business."

"What has Bede Greatorex to do with it? Why should Ollivera come to him?"

"Bede Greatorex has nearly as much to do with it as the clergyman. He and the two Olliveras were cousins. Bede Greatorex was awfully cut up at the death: he'd be glad to see that there was doubt attending it; but he, as a sensible man, can't see it. They buried Mr. Ollivera like a dog."

"What did they do that for?"

"The verdict was *felo-de-se*. Mr. Hurst can tell you all about it, sir; he was at Helstonleigh at the time: he says he never saw such a scene in his life. It was a moonlight night and half the town was there."

"I'll get it all out of him," quoth Roland, who had not lost in the smallest degree his propensity to indulge in desultory gossip.

"Don't ask him in the office," advised Jenner. "Brown would stop you at the first word. He never lets a syllable be dropped upon the subject. I asked him one day what it was to him, and he answered that it was not seemly to allude to the affair in the house, as Mr. Ollivera had been a connection of it. My fancy is that Brown must have known something of it at the time, and does not like it mentioned on his own score," confidentially added little Jenner, who was of a shrewd turn. "I saw him change colour once over it."

"Who *is* Brown?" questioned Roland.

"That's more than I can say," was the reply. "He's an uncommonly efficient clerk; but, once out of the office, he keeps himself to himself, and makes friends with none of us. Here we are, sir."

The eating-house, however unsuitable it might have been to one holding his own as the nephew of an English baronet, to say nothing of an Irish peer, was welcome as sun in harvest to hungry Roland. He ordered a magnificent dinner, off-hand: three plates of meat each, three of tart; vegetables, bread and beer *ad libitum*: paid for the whole, changing his five-pound note, and gave a shilling to the man who waited on them. Little Jenner went out with his face shining.

"We must make the best of our way back, Mr. Yorke. Time's up."

"Oh, is it, though," cried Roland. "I'm not going back yet. I shall take a turn round to see Mrs. Jenkins; there are five hundred things I want to ask her."

One can only be civil to a man who has just treated us to a good dinner, and Jenner did not like to tell Roland point-blank that he had better not go anywhere but to the office.

"They are awfully strict about time in our place," cried he: "and we are busy just now. I must make haste back, sir."

"All right," said easy Roland. "Say I am coming."

His long legs went flying off in the direction of Gower Street, Jenner having giving him the necessary instructions to find it: and he burst clattering in upon Mrs. Jones in her sitting-room without the least ceremony, very much as he used to do in the old days when she was Mrs. Jenkins. Mrs. Jones had been for some time now given to wish that she had not changed her name. Doing very well as the widow Jenkins, years ago, in her little hosier's shop in High Street, Helstonleigh, what was her mortification to find one day that the large and handsome house next door, with its shop-windows of plate-glass, had been opened as another hosier's by a Mr. Richard Jones. Would

customers continue to come to her plain and unpretending mart, when that new one, grand, imposing, and telling of an unlimited stock within, was staring them in the face? The widow Jenkins feared not; and fretted herself to fiddle-strings.

The fear might have had no cause of foundation: the show kept up at the adjoining house was perhaps founded on artificial bases, rather than real. Richard Jones (whom the city had already begun to designate as Dicky) turned out to be of a sociable nature; he made her acquaintance whether she would or no, and suddenly proposed to her to unite the two businesses in one, by making herself, and her stock, and her connection, over to him. Mrs. Jenkins's first impulse was to throw at his head the nearest parcel that came to hand. Familiarity with an idea, however, sometimes reconciles the worst adversary; as at length it did Mrs. Jenkins to this. To give her her due, she took no account whatever of Mr. Jones in the matter; he went for nothing, a bale of waste flung in to make weight, she should rule him just as she had ruled Jenkins; her sole temptation was the flourishing shop, à côté, and the good, well-furnished house. So Mrs. Jenkins exchanged her name for that of Jones, and removed, bag and baggage; resigning the inferior home that had so long sheltered her. It was close upon this, that one of the barristers, coming in to the summer assizes at Helstonleigh, took apartments at Mrs. Jones's. That was Mr. Olliver: and, in the following March, when he again came in, occurred his tragical ending.

Before this, long before it, Mrs. Jones had grown to realize to herself the truth of the homely proverb, All's not gold that glitters. Mr. Jones's connection did not prove to be of the most extensive kind; far from it; the large, imposing stock, turned out to be three parts dummies; and she grew to believe—to see—that his motive in marrying her was to uphold his newly established business by beguiling to it her old customers. The knowledge did not tend to soothe her naturally tart temper; neither did the fact that her husband took a vast deal of pleasure abroad, spent money recklessly, and left her to do all the work. Mr. Jones's debts came out, one after the other; more than could be paid; and one morning some men of the law walked quietly in, and put themselves in possession of the effects. Things had come to a crisis. Mr. Jones, after battling out affairs with the bankruptcy commissioner, started for America; his wife went off to London. Certain money of her own past savings, she had been wise enough to have secured to her separate special use; with a portion of it she bought in some of the furniture, and set up as a letter of lodgings in Gower Street.

But that Roland Yorke had not seen the parlour at Helstonleigh, (which the reader had the satisfaction of once entering with Mr. Buttery) he would have gone well nigh to think this the same room. The red carpet on the floor, the small book-shelves, the mahogany sideboard with its array of glasses, the horsehair chairs, the red cloth on the cen-

tre table, all had been transplanted. When Roland bustled in, he found Mrs. Jones knitting away at lambs'-wool socks, as if for her life. In the intervals of her home occupation, or when her house was slack of lodgers, she did these for sale, and realized a very fair profit.

"Now then," said Roland, stirring up the fire of his own accord, and making himself at home, as he liked to do wherever he might be, "I want to know all about everybody."

Mrs. Jones turned her chair towards him with a jerk; and Roland put question after question about the old city, which he had so abruptly quitted more than seven years before. It may be that Mrs. Jones recognized in him a kind of fellow-sufferer. Neither of them cared to see Helstonleigh again, unless under the auspices of a more propitious fate than the present. Any way, she was gracious to Roland, and gave him information as fast as he asked for it, repeating some things he had heard before. He persisted in calling her Mrs. Jenkins, saying it came more natural than the other name.

Mr. Channing was dead. His eldest son Hamish was living in London. Arthur was Mr. Galloway's right hand; Tom was a clergyman, and just made a minor canon of the old cathedral; Charley Mrs. Jones knew nothing about. The college school had got a new master. Mr. Ketch was reposing in a damp green nook, side by side with Old Jenkins the bedesman. Hamish Channing's bank had come to grief, Mrs. Jenkins did not know how. In the panic, she believed.

"And that beautiful kinsman of mine, William Yorke, reigns at Hazeldon, and old Galloway is flourishing in his office, with his flaxen curls!" burst forth Roland, suddenly struck with a weighty sense of injustice. "The bad people get the luck of it in this world, Mrs. Jenkins; the deserving ones go begging. Hamish Channing's bank come to grief;—bright Hamish! And look at me!—and you! I never saw such a world as this, with its miserable ups and down."

"Ah," said Mrs. Jones with a touch of her native tartness, "it's a good thing there's another world to come after. We may find that a better one."

The prospect (probably from being regarded as rather far-off) did not appear to afford present satisfaction to Roland. He sat pulling at his whiskers, moodily resenting the general blindness of Fortune in regard to merit, and then suddenly wheeled round to his own affairs.

"I say, Mrs. J."—a compromise between the two names and serving for both.—"I want a lodging. Couldn't you let me come here?"

She looked up briskly. "What kind of a lodging? I mean as to position and price."

"Oh, something comfortable," said Roland.

Perhaps for old acquaintance' sake, perhaps because she had some apartments vacant, Mrs. Jones appeared to regard the proposition with no disfavour; and began to talk of her house's accommodation.

"The rooms on the first floor are very good and well furnished," she said. "When I was about it, Mr. Yorke, I thought I might as well have things nice as not, one finds the return; and the drawing-room floor naturally gets served the best. There's a piano in the front room, and the bed in the back room is excellent."

"They'd be just the thing for me," cried Roland, rising to walk about in pleasurable excitement. "What's the rent?"

"They are let for a pound a week. Mr.—"

"That'll do; I can pay it," said he eagerly. "I don't play the piano myself, but it may be useful if I give a party. You'll cook for me?"

"Of course we'll cook," said Mrs. Jones. "But I was about to tell you that those rooms are let to a clergyman. If you——"

Roland had come to an abrupt anchor at the edge of the table, and the look of blank dismay on his face was such as to cut short Mrs. Jones's speech. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"Mrs. J., I couldn't give it; I was forgetting. They are to pay me a pound a-week at Greatorex's; but I can't spend it all in lodgings, I'm afraid. There'll be other things wanted."

"Other things!" ejaculated Mrs. Jones. "I should think there would be other things. Food, and drink, and firing, and light, and wear and tear of clothes, and washing; and a hundred extras beside."

Roland sat in perplexity. Ways and means seemed to have grown dark together.

"Couldn't you let me one room? A room with a turn-up bedstead in it, Mrs. Jenkins, or something of that? Couldn't you take the pound a-week, and do for me?"

"I don't know but I might make some such arrangement, and let you have the front parlour," she slowly said. "We've got a Scripture reader in the back one."

Roland started up impulsively to look at the front parlour, and to take it, off-hand. As they quitted the room—which was built out at the back on the staircase that led down to the kitchen—Roland saw a tall, fair, good-looking young woman, who stopped and asked some question of Mrs. Jones. Which that lady answered sharply.

"I've not time to talk about trifles now, Alletha."

"Who's that?" cried Roland, as they entered the parlour: a small room with a dark paper and faded red curtains.

"It's my sister, Mr. Yorke."

"I say, Mrs. J., this is a stunning room," exclaimed Roland who was in that eager mood of his, when all things looked couleur-de-rose. "Can I come in to-day?"

"You can come to-morrow, if we agree. That sofa lets out into a bedstead at night. You must not get into my debt, though, Mr.

Yorke," she added, in the plain straightforward way that was habitual with her. "I couldn't afford it, and I tell you so beforehand."

"I'll never do that," said Roland, impulsively earnest in his sincerity. "I'll bring you home the pound each week, and then I shan't be tempted to change it. Look here"—taking two sovereigns from his pocket—"that's to steer on ahead with. Does she live here?" he added, going back without ceremony to the subject of Miss Rye. "Alletha, do you call her? What an odd name!"

"The name was a mistake of the parson's when she was christened. It was to have been Allethea. I've had her with me four or five years now. She is a dressmaker, Mr. Yorke, and works sometimes at home, and sometimes out."

"She'd be uncommonly good-looking if she were not such a shadow," commented Roland with candour.

Mrs. Jones gave her head a toss, as if the topic displeased her. "Shadow, indeed! Yes, and she's likely to be one. Never was any pig more obstinate than she."

"Pigs!" cried Roland with energy, "you should see the obstinacy of Natal pigs, Mrs. J. I have. Drove 'em too."

"It couldn't equal hers," disputed Mrs. J., with intense acrimony. "She is wedded to the memory of a runaway villain, Mr. Yorke, that's what she is! A good opportunity presented itself to her of settling, but she'd not take it. She'd sooner fret out her life after *him*, than look upon an honest man. Tie two pigs together by the tail, and let 'em pull two ways till they drop, they'd not equal her. And for a runaway; a man that disgraced himself!"

"What did he do?" asked curious Roland.

"It's not very good to repeat," said Mrs. Jones tartly. "She lived in Birmingham, our native place, till the mother died, and then she came to me at Helstonleigh. First thing she tells me was, that she was engaged to be married to some young man in an office there, George Winter: and over she goes to Birmingham the next Christmas on a visit to her aunt, on purpose to meet him: stays there a week, and comes home again. Well, Mr. Yorke, this grand young man, this George Winter, about whom I had *my* doubts, though I'd never seen him, got into trouble before three more months had gone by: he and a fellow-clerk did something wrong with the money, and Winter decamped."

"I wonder if he went to Port Natal?" mused Roland. "We had some queer people over there."

"It don't much matter where he went," returned Mrs. Jones, hotly. "He did go, and he never came back, and he took Alletha's common sense away with him; what with him and what with the dreadful affair at our house of that poor Mr. Ollivera, she has never been herself since. It both happened about the same time."

Roland recalled what he had recently heard from Jenner regard-

ing the death of the barrister, and felt a little at sea. "What was Ollivera to her?" he asked.

"What! why, nothing," said Mrs. Jones. "And she's no better than a lunatic to have taken it up as she did. Whether it's that, or whether it's the pining after the other precious runaway, I don't know, but one of the two's preying upon her. There's Mr. Ollivera!"

Roland went to the window. In the street, talking, stood a dark, small man in the garb of a clergyman, with a grave but not unpleasant face, and sad dark eyes.

"Oh, that's Mr. Ollivera, is it?" quoth Roland. "He looks another shadow."

"And it is another case of obstinacy," rejoined Mrs. Jones. "He has refused all along to believe that his brother killed himself; you could as soon make him think the sun never shone. He comes to my parlour and talks to me about it by the hour together, with his note-case in his hand, till Alletha can't sit any longer, and goes rushing off with her work like any mad woman."

"Why should she rush off? What harm does it do to her?"

"I don't know: it's one of the puzzles to be found out. His coming here was a curious thing, Mr. Yorke. One day I was standing at the front door, and saw a young clergyman passing. He looked at me, and stopped; and I knew him for Henry Ollivera, though we had only met at the time of the death. When I told him I had rooms to let and very nice ones, for it struck me that perhaps he might be able to recommend them, he looked out in that thoughtful, dreamy way he has (look at his eyes now, Mr. Yorke!) seeing nothing, I'm certain; and then said he'd go up and look at the rooms; and we went up. Would you believe that he took them for himself on the spot?"

"What a brick!" cried Roland, who was following out suggested ideas but imperfectly. "I'll take this one."

"Alletha gave a great cry when she heard he was coming, and said it was Fate. I demanded what she meant by that, but she'd not open her lips further. Talk of Natal pigs, forsooth! He took possession of them within the week: and I say, Mr. Yorke, that, Fate or not Fate, he never had but one object in coming—the sifting of that past calamity. His poor mistaken mind is ever on the rack to bring some discovery to light. It's like that search one reads of, after the philosopher's stone."

Roland laughed. He was not very profound himself, but the philosopher's stone and Mrs. Jones seemed utterly at variance.

"It does," she said. "For there's no stone to be found in the one case, and no discovery to be made in the other, beyond what has been made. I don't say this to the parson, Mr. Yorke; I listen to him and humour him for the sake of his dead brother."

"Well, I shan't bother you about dead people, Mrs. J., so you let me the room."

The bargain was not difficult. Every suggestion made by Mrs. Jones, he acceded to before it had well left her lips. He had fallen into good hands. Whatever might be Mrs. Jones's faults of manner and temper, she was strictly just, regarding Roland's interests at least in an equal degree with her own.

"Do you know," said Roland, nursing his knee as the bargain concluded, "I have never felt so much at home since I left it, as I did just now by your fire, Mrs. J. I'm uncommon glad I came here."

He was genuine in what he said: indeed Roland could but be genuine always, too much so sometimes. Mrs. J.—as he called her—brought back so vividly the old home life of his boyhood, now gone by for ever, that it was like being at Helstonleigh again.

"My eldest brother, George, is dead. Gerald is grand with his chambers and his club, and is married besides, but I've not seen him. Tod is in the army: an awful young scamp he was, his face all manner of colours from fighting, and his clothes torn to that degree that Lady Augusta used to threaten to send him to school without any. Where's your husband, number two, Mrs. J.?"

"It is to be hoped he is where he will never come away from; he went sailing off three years ago from Liverpool," she answered sharply; for, of all sore subjects, this of her second marriage was the worst. "Any way, I have made myself and my goods secure from him."

"Perhaps *he's* at Port Natal, driving pigs. He'll find out what they are if he is."

Mr. Ollivera was turning to the house. Roland opened the parlour door when he had passed it; to look after him.

Some one else was there. Peering out from a dark nook in the passage, her lips slightly apart, her eyes strained after the clergyman with a strange kind of fear in their depths, stood Alletha Rye. Mr. Ollivera suddenly turned back, as though he had forgotten something, and she shrank out of sight. Mrs. Jones introduced Roland. "Mr. Roland Yorke."

Mr. Ollivera glanced upwards. His face was thin; his dark brown eyes shone with a flashing, restless, feverish light. Be you very sure when that peculiar light is seen, it betokens a mind ill at rest. The eyes fixed themselves on Roland: and perhaps there was something in the tall, fine form, in the good-nature of the strong-featured countenance, that recalled a memory to Mr. Ollivera.

"Any relative of the Yorkes of Helstonleigh?"

"I should think so," said Roland, "I am a Yorke of Helstonleigh. But I've not been there since I went to Port Natal, seven years and more ago. Do you know them, Mr. Ollivera?"

"I know a little of the minor-canon, William Yorke, and——"

"Oh! he!" curtly interrupted Roland with a vast amount of scorn. "He is a beauty to know, he is."

The remark, so like a flash of boyish resentment, excited a slight smile in Mr. Ollivera.

"Bill Yorke showed himself a cur once in his life, and it's not me that's going to forget it. He'd have cared for my telling him of it, too, had I come back worth a few millions from Port Natal, and gone about Helstonleigh in my carriage-and-four."

Mr. Ollivera said some courteous words about hoping to make Roland's better acquaintance, and departed. Roland suddenly remembered the claims of his office, and tore away at full speed.

Never slackening it until he reached the house of Greatorex and Greatorex; and there he very nearly knocked down a little girl who had just come out of the private entrance. Roland turned to apologize; but the words died on his lips, and he stood like one suddenly struck dumb, staring in silence.

In the pretty young lady, one of two who were talking together in the passage, and looked round at the commotion, Roland thought he recognized an old friend, now the wife of his cousin William Yorke. He bounded in, and seized her hands.

"You are Constance Channing!"

"No," replied the young lady, with wondering eyes. "I am Annabel."

Mr. Roland Yorke's first movement was to take the sweet face between his hands, and kiss it tenderly. Struggling, blushing, almost weeping, the young lady drew back against the wall.

"How dare you?" she demanded in bitter resentment. "Are you out of your mind, sir?"

"Good gracious, Annabel, don't you know me? I am your old play-fellow, Roland Yorke."

"Does that give you any right to insult me? I might have known it was no one else," she added in the moment's anger.

"Why, Annabel, it was only done in my great joy. I had used to kiss you, you remember: you were but a little mite then, and I was a great big tease. Oh, I am so glad to see you! I'd rather have met you than all the world. You can't be angry with me. Shake hands and be friends."

To remain long at variance with Roland Yorke was one of the impossibilities of social life. He possessed himself of Annabel Channing's hand and nearly shook it off. What with his hearty words, and what (may it be confessed, even of Annabel) with the flattery of his praises and genuine admiration, Annabel's smiles broke forth amidst her blushes. Roland's eyes looked as if they would devour her.

"I say, I never saw anybody so pretty in all my life. It is the nicest face; just like what Constance's used to be. I thought it was Constance, you know. Was she not daft, though, to go and take up again with that miserable William Yorke!"

Standing by, having looked on with a smile of grand pity, mingled with amusement, was a lady in most fashionable attire, the amount of hair on her head something marvellous to look at.

"I should have known Roland Yorke anywhere," she said, holding out her hand.

"Why, if I don't believe it's one of the Joliffes!"

"Hush, Roland," said Annabel, hastening to stop his freedom, and the tone proved that she had nearly forgiven him on her own score. "This is Mrs. Bede Greatorex."

"Formerly Louisa Joliffe," put in that lady. "Now do you know me?"

"Well, I never met with such a strange thing," cried Roland. "That makes three—four—of the old Helstonleigh people I have met to-day. Hurst, Mrs. J., and now you two. I think there must be magic in it."

"You must come and see me soon, Roland," said Mrs. Greatorex as she went out. Miss Channing waited for the little girl, Jane Greatorex, who had run in her wilful manner into her uncle Bede's office. Roland offered to fetch her.

"Thank you," said Miss Channing. "Do you know which it is?"

"Know! Law bless you!" cried Roland. "What do you suppose I am, Annabel? Clerk to Greatorex and Greatorex."

Her cheeks flushed with surprise. "Clerk to Greatorex and Greatorex! I thought you went to Port Natal to make your fortune."

"But I did not make it. It has been nothing but knocking about; then and since. Carrick is a trump, as he always was, but he gets floored himself sometimes; and that's his case now. If they had not given me a stool here (which he got for me) I'm not sure but I should have gone into the hot-pie line."

"The—what?"

"The hot-pie line: crying them in the streets, you know, with a basket and a white cloth, and a paper cap on. There's a fine opening for it down in Poplar."

Miss Channing burst out laughing.

"It would be nothing to a fellow who has been over yonder," avowed Roland, jerking his head in the direction Port Natal might be supposed to lie. And then leaping to a widely different subject in his volatile lightness, he said something that brought the tears to her eyes, the drooping tremor to her lips.

"It was so good in the old days; all of us children together; we were no better. And Mr. Channing is gone I hear! Oh, I am so sorry, Annabel."

"Two years last February," she said in a hushed tone. "We have just put off our mourning for him. Mamma is in the dear old house, and Arthur and Tom live with her. Will you please look for the little girl, Mr. Yorke?"

"Now I vow!"—burst forth Roland in a heat. "I'll not stand that, you know. One would think you had put on stilts. If ever you call me 'Mr. Yorke' again, I'll go back to Port Natal."

She laughed a little pleasant laugh of embarrassment. "But please I want my pupil. I cannot go myself into the offices to look for her."

At that moment Jane Greatorex came dancing up, and was secured. Roland stood at the door to watch them away, exchanged a few light words with a clerk then entering, and finally bustled into the office.

"Am I late?" began Roland, with characteristic indifference. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Brown. I was looking at some lodgings; and I met an old friend or two. It all served to hinder me, but I'll soon make up for it."

"You have been away two hours and a half, Mr. Yorke."

"It's more I think," said Roland. "I assure you I did my best to get back. You'll soon find what I can get through, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown made no reply whatever. Jenner was absent, but Hurst was at his post, writing, and the faint hum of voices in the adjoining room, told that some client was holding conference with Mr. Bede Greatorex.

Roland resumed his copying where he had left off, and wrote for a quarter of an hour without speaking. Diligence unheard of! At the end of that time he looked off for a little relaxation.

"Hurst, where do you think I am going to lodge?"

"How should I know," responded Mr. Hurst. And Roland told him where in an under-tone.

"Jenner and I were going along Tottenham Court Road, and met her," he resumed presently, after a short interlude of writing. "She looks twenty years older."

"That's through her tongue," suggested Mr. Hurst.

"In the old days down there, I'd as soon have gone to live in a Tartar's house as in hers. But weren't her teas and toasted muffins good! Here, in this desert of a place; and it's worse of a desert to me than Port Natal; to get into her house will seem like getting into home again."

Mr. Brown, looking off his work to refer to a paper by his side, took the opportunity to direct a glance at the opposite desk. Whether Roland took it to himself or not, he applied sedulously for a couple of minutes to his writing.

"I say, Hurst, what a row there is about that dead Mr. Ollivera!"

"Where's the row?"

"Well, it seems to crop up everywhere. Jenner talked of it; *she* talked of it; I hear that other Mr. Ollivera talks of it. You were in the thick of it, they say."

Hurst nodded. "My father was the surgeon fetched to him when he was found dead, and had to give evidence at the inquest. I went to see him buried; *it was* a scene. They stole a march on us, though."

"Who did?"

"They let us all disperse, and then went and read the burial service over the grave; Ollivera the clergyman, and three or four more. Arthur Channing was one."

"Arthur Channing!"

Had any close observer been in the office, he might perchance have noticed that while Mr. Brown's eyes still sought his work, his pen had ceased to play. His lips were slightly parted; his ears were cocked; the tale evidently bore for him as great an interest as it did for the speakers—an interest he did not choose should be seen. Had they been speaking aloud, he would have checked the conversation at once with an intimation that it could not concern anybody: as they spoke covertly, he listened at leisure. Mr. Hurst resumed.

"Yes, Arthur Channing. The rumour ran that William Yorke had promised to be present, but declined at the last moment, and Arthur Channing voluntarily took his place, out of sympathy for the feelings of the dead's man brother."

"Bravo, old Arthur! he's the trump he always was. That's the Reverend Bill all over."

"The Reverend Bill let him have his surplice. And there they stood, and read the burial service over the poor fellow by stealth, just as the old Scotch covenanters held their secret services in caves. Altogether a vast deal of romance encircled the affair, and some mystery. One Godfrey Pitman's name was mixed up in it."

"Who was Godfrey Pitman?"

Hurst dipped his pen slowly into the ink. "Nobody ever knew. He was lodging in the house, and went away mysteriously the same evening. Helstonleigh got to say in joke that there must have been two Godfrey Pitmans. The people of the house swore through thick and thin that the real Godfrey Pitman left at half-past four o'clock and went away by rail at five; others saw him quit the house at dark, and depart by the eight o'clock train. It got to a regular dispute."

"But had Godfrey Pitman anything to do with Mr. Ollivera?"

"Not he."

"Then where was the good of bringing him up?" cried Roland.

"I am only telling you of the different interests that were brought to bear upon it. It *was* an affair, that death was!"

The entrance of Mr. Frank Greatorx broke up the colloquy, recalling the clerks to their legitimate work. But the attention of one of them had become so absorbed that it was with difficulty he could get himself back again to passing life.

And that one was Mr. Brown.

(To be continued.)

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

THERE are some styles of dress that are in our minds completely identified with certain historical periods. We find it utterly impossible to imagine any generation of women wearing a stiff, tall ruff around their necks, except the stately ladies who sat in the shadow of Elizabeth's throne, reading Herodotus or Tacitus with as placid smiles upon their lips as those which light up the faces of our modern damsels as they turn over the pages of a novel. We cannot separate diaphanous draperies and loosely floating robes from our conception of the vivacious and not too scrupulous beauties who sparkled at the Court of Charles the Second.

That which is the case with costume is also the case with some distinguished men and women, who seem to fit as exactly into their niches in history as a little triangular bit of painted wood fits into the corner of a child's puzzle, and who could not, we imagine, have been produced by any other age save the one in which they flourished. Madame de Sévigné is one of these. You could no more think of such a woman living in the France of St. Louis, or the France of Napoleon the Third, than you could expect to gather an orange-flower in an English orchard, or to find a snowdrop among the plumes of feathery corn that nod upon the sun-burnt brow of August. To comprehend this, however, thoroughly, we must turn to Madame de Sévigné's life, and must take as close a view of it as is possible in so brief a paper as the present.

At an ancient château in Burgundy, (a château, the casements of which had quivered at the trumpet-blast that had been wafted over France from the field of Jarnac, and the halls of which had rung with laughter at stories brought from the capital concerning the merry doings of Henri Quatre and the fair Gabrielle), was born, in sixteen hundred and twenty-six, Marie de Rabutin. The Rabutins were an old and illustrious family, who had fought in the Crusades and under the banner of the Pucelle; nor was Marie's descent on the mother's side less distinguished. At that date Louis the Thirteenth was on the throne; and there had set in for France that period of splendid stagnation which began with this monarch's reign, and which continued (notwithstanding the glitter on the surface) to grow more and more foul in its radical internal corruption, until the foetid mass was broken up by the hideous fermentation of the Revolution. Notwithstanding the dark crimes which stain every page in the story of the Valois sovereigns, their era had been an

era of progress, for the spirit of the reformers was alive in France; and in spite of the efforts made by royal decree and priestly ban to lay it, was walking abroad through the land, scattering light around its path. Henry IV., with all the undignified coquetting between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and the scheming subtlety that characterized his early life, was, after he ascended the French throne, a truly great king, who read at a glance the involved problems of European politics; who spread out the mantle of his princely clemency over the persecuted Huguenots; who raised the Fleur-de-Lis and held them aloft as they had not been held since the days of Charlemagne. But Louis the Thirteenth was a very different monarch to his mighty father. He was one of those men, every line of whose vaguely defined character seems to be drawn in faint demi-tints; and under his rule religious bigotry, political slavery, gorgeous, tedious ceremonial at the Court, and abject poverty, with animal-like ignorance, among the people, became to be the order of the day in France. It was into this France that little Marie was born, and grew up with its influences working upon her whole being. Her parents died when she was little more than an infant, and she was chiefly educated by an uncle, who was an Abbé. Under this tutelage she was of course taught to regard the dogmas of the Roman Catholic church as nothing less than divine institutions; and though the Abbé, when he turned away from his pretty pupil, had, we suspect, upon his lips that half contemptuous, half compassionate smile which was upon the countenances of many of the French priests of that day in their private moments, and which said more plainly than words, "This is a very nice religion for women and children, but won't do for us knowing men of the world," little Marie received his lessons in the most perfect good faith. Her love of society, and her strong personal attachments, kept her from ever becoming a regular devotee, but all her life she was a very zealous Roman Catholic; and in the midst of the brilliant dissipation of the Court, she would at times be seized with fits of enthusiastic piety that prompted her to retire for solitary meditation. These sudden and brief withdrawals from the world have to our eyes something of a theatrical and affected air; but in reality they were quite sincere, and were the results of her early education. But her religious principles did for her much more than this, since they proved a talisman that kept her reputation untouched at a time when ladies thought a good deal more of having their diamonds without flaw, than their characters without spot. To do the worthy Abbé justice, he gave his niece a very liberal education in secular learning; for he made her a good classical scholar and gave her a taste for elegant literature. By her female relations Marie de Rabutin was taught four things. Firstly, that the men and women who resided at the French Court enjoyed an existence that would make even the glories and felicity of Paradise itself seem small to them. Secondly, that if you did not live in Paris

you might as well have done with your life at once. Thirdly, that to dress becomingly was the chief duty of woman. And fourthly, that all those unlucky members of society who had not a De before their names were to be looked upon as an entirely different order of beings to the individuals who possessed that inestimable prefix. In truth it is wonderful how, after such training, she could have preserved all that genuine warmth of heart which distinguished her through life. As it was, they so far stunted her intellectual and moral growth that the delicate insight into character, the vivid imagination, and the playful wit which, in our days, might have made her a mistress in fiction, only produced so charming and yet so at times wearisome and unsatisfactory a performance as her series of Letters; while the vast depths of womanly tenderness which were in her nature only resulted in her becoming an idolizing and sometimes a too exigeante wife and mother.

At a very early age Marie was married to the Marquis de Sévigné, who was the representative of one of the wealthiest and most illustrious noble houses in France; and launched thus young into the middle of the great world, she, with all the facile quickness of a girl, learnt that art of pleasing which such a school so readily teaches to a clever and pretty woman, and in which she continued a proficient to the end of her days. Louis XIV., that man whose whole life, as we look back at it, seems to us to have been one long waste of talent, power, health, love, was now in the zenith of his splendour. The whole Court was, as it were, one immense temple, in which every one took a greater or less share in the adoration of their master; and the young Marquise de Sévigné soon fell into her place among the rest. The Marquis does not seem to have been a very suitable or comfortable husband for Marie de Rabutin. He was a handsome, dissolute, blasé, middle-aged man of the world, who was wearied with the passionate love his young wife lavished on him, who preferred the rattle of women of the demi-monde to her graceful wit and refined conversation, who made light of her religious observances. Therefore when, at the end of seven years of married life, he died, leaving her the sole mistress of his fine fortune, Madame de Sévigné (though at first she sincerely mourned his loss) found herself, in reality, in a much happier position. She had two children, a son and a daughter, who now became the objects of the idolatry that she had before paid to their father. They both returned her affection far more warmly than her husband had done; though the absolute craving for love that there was in her heart seems never to have been quite satisfied with what they gave her back. For her son Madame de Sévigné was very ambitious. He seems to have been an easy-tempered young man, with something of his mother's vivacity and good natural parts. But he squandered his abilities as he squandered his princely income, and the only thing his mother ever saw him achieve, was a marriage with a rich heiress who proved a convenient

golden raft on which he floated through his pecuniary difficulties. Her daughter, who was yet more than her son the object of her extravagant fondness, appears to have differed in many respects from Madame de Sévigné. The mother's beauty consisted chiefly in piquant mobility of expression, the daughter's in regularity of feature. The mother was all impulse and imagination, the daughter all reflection and judgment. The mother was always ready to believe, and to revere, and to confide; the daughter was tinged with the scepticism of the day. Thus it came to pass that though the bond of cordial love that united them was life-long in its endurance, it was sometimes chafed by the elder lady's too demonstrative and exigent affection wearying the younger. For a little time, Mdle. de Sévigné was the theme of the verse of all the poets and poetasters of the French Court. While, however, she was still a girl, her mother married her to the Count de Grignan. At first sight it seems to us strange that Madame de Sévigné should have selected Grignan from among the many suitors for her daughter's hand, since, though he was rich and of good birth, he was middle-aged, had been married twice before, and had done nothing particular to distinguish himself. But when we see him in the sequel prove a most affectionate and indulgent husband, we admire Madame de Sévigné's insight into character, and comprehend her fond care for her child's happiness. A little while after this marriage, the Count de Grignan was appointed to some office in the South of France, which made it necessary for him to reside in Provence, a circumstance which caused the separation that was so painful to mother and daughter, but to which we owe most of Madame de Sévigné's celebrated letters. These letters are quite unique in their character. There is an airy lightness in the style that reminds us of a bird skimming over the water. Her playful wit literally dances in every second line. We live among the men and women of the age of Louis the Fourteenth as distinctly as we live among the men and women of our own time. Frequently the warm, impulsive heart of the writer seems to be throbbing against our own. But what is most characteristic of all is the way in which sentences of the most shrewd common sense, and bits of grave, literary criticism, suddenly crop up in the midst of the most high-flown sentimentalism. That which is also very charming in these letters is the *naïveté* with which she displays all her little female weaknesses, such as the true worship de grande dame for rank and fashion, and the nervous, restless, intensely feminine greediness to hear from the beloved object incessant expressions of affection.

They are strange-looking old days to our eyes, those of Louis the Fourteenth, as we gaze at them in the mirror of these letters. The king's mistress sits beside the king's confessor; the gambler scruples not to cheat in the presence of royalty itself; the train of half-naked, chain-laden galley slaves jostles against the gilded coach of a Duke; men and women flit past us in swift procession in these minute records of

daily life two centuries ago ; the sweet, patient face smiles on us of her whose love lay as a glow-worm in the corner of Louis's heart, even when his short-lived flames of sensuous passion burnt the brightest—of her, his wedded wife, his queen, his Marie Thérèse ; the form of the persecuted Fouquet stands grandly out in the hour of his adversity, and like a true woman, Sévigné keeps by him in his fall ; the lovely Lavallière glides by with downcast, saint-like eyes, even while she sins. We listen to Bourdeloue and Mascaron preaching on Good Friday to rows of fine ladies, whose servants have kept places for them since Wednesday ; the one dropping among his audience his carefully elaborated sentences, which are so turned as to fit comfortably, like elastic bands, broader or narrower consciences, and repeating the same sermon every year with renewed effect, just as an actor repeats some favourite character ; the other pouring forth spontaneously the torrents of his eloquence, and launching the thunders of his invective even against the throne itself. We watch the Court ladies assemble around the *lit de réception* of a princess, and observe all the petty triumphs, and needle-like thrusts, and artfully contrived slights, and significant glances that go on among them. We see Scuderi, the great novelist's ugly, intelligent countenance, as she sits taking in all around her. We hear poor Mdlle. sobbing out in her bed the name of Lauzane, and the saturnine Rochefoucauld shrieking in his physical agony. We mark the ever-green, irrepressible Ninon, a siren still at fifty, with all the youth of Paris at her feet, whom she is indoctrinating in doubtful theology and yet more doubtful morals. But whether she is grave or gay, descriptive or reflective, there is one under-strain which, now louder, now softer, swells through every thing Madame de Sévigné writes. "*Ma fille, ma fille, ma fille,*" such is the note that she never tires of sounding. The daughter evidently grows sometimes sick of the incessant incense, and the reader, it must be owned, agrees with her ; but still the mother's heart pours forth its tender litany to its darling. "*Ma fille, take care of your beauty, for my sake. Ma fille, tell me what you are doing every hour in the day, that I may live with you in thought. Ma fille, a gypsy girl, who came to my door with a tale of distress, danced a minuet like you, and I have written to the minister to get her father released from the galleys.*" Such are the passionate cries that burst ever from her lips. Madame de Sévigné continued to read her Greek and Latin books, and to sparkle in the eyes of the most brilliant men and women of that brilliant Court, till she was quite an old lady. She was true to the last to the great love of her life, for the disease of which she died was chiefly brought on by the anxiety and fatigue she suffered in attending upon her daughter through a long illness. As we turn away from her we feel that her faults were those of her day ; but her virtues were her own.

ALICE KING.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

IT happened the last year Tod was at school. The one following that moonlight hunt we had, told of some time ago. Summer weather had come in, and we were looking forward to the holidays, hoping the heat would last.

The half-mile field, called so from its length, on Vale Farm was being mowed. Sunday intervened, and the grass was left to dry until the Monday. At the upper end of it the haymakers had begun to put it into cocks. The river stretched past along the field on one side; a wooden fence bounded it on the other. It was out of all proportion, so long and so narrow.

Tod and I and Sanker and Harry Vale were spending the Sunday at the Farm. Since that hunt last autumn Mr. and Mrs. Vale often invited us. There was no evening service, and we went into the hay-field, and began throwing the hay at one another. It was rare fun, they might nearly have heard our shouts at Worcester House; and I don't believe but that every one of us forgot it was Sunday.

What with the sultry weather and the hay, some of us got into a tolerable heat. The river wore a tempting look; and Tod and Sanker, without so much as a thought, undressed themselves behind the trees, and plunged in. It was twilight: the air had begun to wear its weird silence; the shadows were putting on their ghastliness; the moon, well up, sailed along under white clouds.

I and Vale were walking slowly back towards the Farm, when a great cry broke over the water,—a cry as of something in pain; but whether from anything more than a night-bird, was uncertain. Vale stopped and turned his head.

A second cry: louder, longer, more distinct, and full of agony. It came from one of those two in the water. Vale flew back with his fleet foot—fleetier than any fellow's in the school, except Tod's. As I followed a startling recollection came over me, and I wondered how it was that all of us had been so senseless as to forget it: that one particular spot on the river was known to be dangerous.

"Bear up; I'm coming," shouted Vale. "Don't lose your heads."

A foot-passenger, walking on the other side the fence, saw something was wrong: if he did not hear Vale's words, he heard the cry. He came cutting across the field, scattering the hay with his feet. And then I saw it was Baked Pie: which meant our mathematical master, Mr.

Blair. They had given him at baptism the name of "Pyefinch," after some old uncle who had money to leave; no second name, nothing but that: and the school had converted him into "Baked Pie." But I don't think fathers and mothers have any right to put odd names upon helpless babies and send them out in the world to be a laughing-stock.

Blair was not a bad fellow, putting his name aside, and went in for honours at Cambridge. We got to the place together.

"What is amiss, Ludlow?"

"I don't know, sir. Todhetley and Sanker are in the water; and we've heard cries."

"In the water to-night! And *there*."

Vale, already in the middle of the river, was swimming back, holding up Sanker. But Tod was nowhere to be seen. Mr. Blair looked up and down; and an awful fear came over me. The current led down direct to Mr. Charles Vale's mill—Vale's uncle: more than one had found his death there.

"Oh, sir! Mr. Blair! where is he? What has gone with him?"

"Hush!" breathed Mr. Blair. He was sliding off some of his things quietly, his eyes fixed on a particular part of the river. In he went, striking out for it without more splash than he could help, and reached it just as Tod's head appeared above the water. *The third time of rising.* I did not go in for such a girl's trick as to faint; but I never afterwards could trace the minutes as they passed until Tod was lying on the grass under the trees. *That* I remember always; the scene is before my eyes now as plainly as it was then, though more time has gone by since than perhaps you'd think for: the treacherous river flowing on calmly, the quivering leaves overhead, through which the moon was glittering, and Tod lying there white and motionless. Mr. Blair had saved his life, there could be no question of that, saved it only by a minute of time, and I thought to myself I'd never call him Baked Pie again.

"Instead of standing moonstruck, Ludlow, suppose you make a run to the Farm and see what help you can get," spoke Mr. Blair. "Todhetley must be carried there, and put between hot blankets."

Help was got. Sanker walked to the Farm, Tod was carried; and a regular bustle set in when they arrived there. Both of them were put to bed: Tod had come to then. Mrs. Vale and the servants ran up and down like wild Indians; and the good old lady with the white hair insisted upon sitting up by Tod's side all night.

"No, mother," said Mr. Vale, "some of us will do that."

"My son, I tell you that I shall watch by him myself," returned the old lady; and as they deferred to her always, she did.

When the explanation of the accident was given—as much of it as ever could be given—it sounded rather strange. *Both* of them had been taken with cramp, and the river was not in fault, after all. Tod

said that he had been in the water two or three minutes, when he was seized with what he supposed to be cramp in the legs, though he had never had it before. He was turning to strike out for the bank, when he found himself caught hold of by Sanker. They loosed each other in a minute, but Tod's legs were helpless, and he sank.

Sanker's story was very much the same. He was seized with cramp, and in his fear caught hold of Tod for protection. Tod was an excellent swimmer, Sanker a poor one; but while Sanker's cramp got better, or at least no worse, Tod's disabled him. Most likely, as we decided when we heard this, Sanker, who never went below at all, would have got out of the water without help; Tod would have been drowned but for Mr. Blair. He had sunk twice when the good rescue came. Mr. Featherston, the man of pills who attended the school, said it was all through their having jumped into the water when they were in a white heat; the cold had struck to them. While Mrs. Hall, with her grave face, thought it was through their having gone bathing on a Sunday.

Whatever it was, Old Frost made a commotion. He was not severe in general, but he raised enough noise over this. What with one thing and another, the school, he declared, was being perpetually upset.

Tod and Sanker came back from Mr. Vale's on the next day; Monday. The Doctor ordered them into his study, and sat there with his cane in his hand while he talked, rapping the table with it now and again as fiercely as if it had been their backs. And the backs would surely have got it but for having just escaped coffins.

All this would not have been much, but it was to lead to a great deal more. To events, many, one after another; quite a chain of them; and to trouble and sorrow in the far-off end. Hannah, at home, was fond of repeating to Lena what she called the sayings of Poor Richard, "For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; and all for the want of a little care about a horse-shoe nail." The horse-shoe nail and the man's loss seemed a great deal nearer each other than that Sunday night's accident, and what was eventually to come of it. A little insignificant mustard-seed, dropped into the ground, shoots forth and becomes in the end a great spreading tree.

On the Wednesday, who should come over but the Squire, clasping Pyefinch Blair's hand in his, and saying with tears in his good old eyes that he had saved his son's life. Old Frost, you see, had written the news to Dyke Manor. Tod, strong and healthy in constitution, was all right again, not a hair of his head the worse for it; but Sanker had not escaped so well.

As early as the Monday night, the first night of his returning home, it began to come on; and the next morning the boys, sleeping in the same room, told a tale of Sanker's having been delirious. He had sat up in bed and woke them all up with his cries, thinking he was trying

to swim out of deep water, and could not. Next he said he wanted to drink; they emptied the big water-jug, but his thirst kept saying "More, more!" Sanker did not seem to remember this. He came down with the rest, his face very white, except for a pinkish spot in the middle of his two cheeks, and he told the fellows they were chaffing him. The fellows said they were not; and one, it was Bill Whitney, said they'd not think of chaffing him just after his having been so nearly drowned.

It went on to the afternoon. Sanker eat no dinner, for I looked to see; he was but one amidst the many, and it was not noticed by the masters. And if it had been, they'd have thought that the ducking had taken away his appetite. The drawing-master, Wilson, followed suit with Hall, and said he was not surprised at their being nearly drowned, after making hay on the Sunday. But, about four o'clock, when the first-class were before Dr. Frost with their Greek books, Sanker suddenly let his fall. Instead of stooping for it, his eyes took a kind of stupid far-off look, as if they were seeking for it round the walls of the room.

"Lay hold of him," said Dr. Frost.

He did not faint, but seemed dull: it looked as much like a lazy fit as anything; and he was sensible. They put him to sit on one of the benches, and then he began to tremble.

"He must be got to bed," said the doctor. "Mr. Blair, kindly see Mrs. Hall, will you. Tell her to warm it. Stay. Wait a moment."

Dr. Frost followed Mr. Blair from the hall. It was to say that Sanker had better go at once to the blue-room. If the bed there was not aired, or otherwise ready, Sanker's own bedding could be taken to it. "I'll give Mrs. Hall the orders myself," said the doctor.

The blue-room—called so from its blue-stained walls—was the one used on emergencies. When we found Sanker had been taken there, we made up our minds that he was going to have an illness. Featherston came, and thought the same.

The next day, Wednesday, he was in a kind of fever, rambling in his speech every other minute. The Squire said he should like to see him, and Blair took him up. Sanker lay with the same pink hue on his cheeks, only deeper; and his eyes were bright and glistening. Hall, who was addicted to putting in her word on all occasions when it could tell against us boys, said if he had stayed two or three days in the bed at Vale Farm, where he was first put, he'd have been all right. It had been Sanker's own doings to get up. When Mrs. Vale wanted to send him back to it again, he told her he was quite well, and came off to school.

He knew the Squire, and put out his hand. The Squire took it, not saying a word. He told us later that to him Sanker's face looked to have death in it. When he would have spoken, Sanker's eyes had grown wild again, and he was talking nonsense about his class-books.

"Johnny, boy, you sit in his room a bit at times; you are patient and

not rough," said the Squire, when he went out to his carriage, for he had driven over. "I've asked them to let you be up there as much as they can. The poor boy is very ill, and has no relatives near him."

Dwarf Giles, touching his hat to Tod and me, was at the horses' heads, Bob and Blister. The cattle knew us: I'm sure of it. They had had several hours' rest in Old Frost's stables, and the Squire had gone tramping on foot about the neighbourhood to call on people. Dr. Frost, standing out with us, admired the fine dark horses greatly; at which Giles was prouder than if the doctor had admired *him*. He cared for nothing in the world so much as those two animals, and groomed them with a will.

"You'll take care that he wants for nothing, Doctor," I heard the Squire say as he shook hands. "Don't spare any care or expense to get him well; I wish to look upon this illness as my charge. It seems something like an injustice, you see, that my boy should have come off without damage, and this poor fellow be lying there."

He took the reins and stepped up to his seat, Giles getting in beside him. As we watched the horses step off with the high spring that the Squire loved, he looked back and nodded to us. And it struck me that, in this care for Sanker, the Pater was trying to make some recompense for the suspicion cast on him a year before at Dyke Manor.

It was a sharp, short illness, the fever high and raging. I had never been with any body in such a one before, and I didn't wish to be again. To hear how Sanker's mind rambled was marvellous; but some of us shivered when it came to ravings. Very often he'd be making hay; fighting against numbers that were throwing cocks at him, while he could not throw back upon them. Then he'd be in the water, buffeting with high sea-waves, and shrieking out that he was drowning, and throwing his thin hot arms aloft in agony. Sometimes the trouble would be his lessons, hammering at Latin derivations and Greek roots; and next he was toiling through a problem in Euclid. One night when he was at the worst, Old Featherston lost his head, and the next day Mr. Carden came posting from Worcester in his carriage. I wonder if he remembers it?

There were medical men of repute nearer; but somehow in extremity we all turn to him. And his skill did not fail here. Whether it might be any particular relief he was enabled to give, or that the disease had reached its crisis, I can't tell, but from the moment Mr. Carden stood at his bed-side, Sanker began to mend. Featherston said the next day that the worst of the danger had passed. It seemed to us that it had just set in; no rat was ever as weak as he.

The holidays came then, and the boys went home, all but me. Sanker couldn't lift a hand, but he could smile at us and understand, and he said he'd like to have me stay a bit with him; so they sent word from home I might. Mr. Blair stayed also; Dr. Frost wished

it. The Doctor was subpoenaed to give evidence on a trial at Westminster, and had to hasten up to London. Blair had no relatives at all, and did not care to go anywhere. He told me in confidence that his staying saved his pocket. Blair was strict in school, but over Sanker's bed he got as friendly with me as possible. I liked him, and grew to dislike their calling him Baked Pie as much as he did.

"You go out and get some air, Ludlow," he said to me the day after the school broke up, "or we may have you ill next."

Upon that I demanded what I wanted with air. I had taken precious long walks with the fellows up to the day before yesterday.

"You go," said he, curtly.

"Go, Johnny," added Sanker, in his poor weak voice, which couldn't raise itself above a whisper. "I'm getting well, you know."

My way of taking the air was to sit down at the school-room desk and write to Tod. In about five minutes somebody walked round the house as if looking for an entrance, and then stopped at the side-door. Putting my head out at the window, I took a view of her. It was a young lady in a plain grey dress and straw bonnet, with a cloak over her arm, and an umbrella put up against the sun. The back regions were turned inside out, for they had begun the summer cleaning that morning, and the cook came stalking along in pattens to answer the knock.

"This is Dr. Frost's, I believe. Can I see him?"

It was a sweet, calm, gentle voice. The cook, who had no notion of visitors coming at the cleaning season, when the boys were just got rid of, and the Doctor had gone, stared at her for a moment, and then asked in her surly way whether she had business with Dr. Frost. That cook and Molly at home might have run in a curricie, they were such a match for temper.

"Business!—oh, certainly. I must see him if you please."

The cook kicked off her pattens, and went up the back stairs, leaving the young lady outside. As it was business, she supposed she must call Mr. Blair.

"Somebody wants Dr. Frost," was the announcement she made to him. "A girl at the side door."

Which of course caused Blair to suppose it might be a child from one of the cottages come to ask for help of some sort; they came sometimes. He thought Hall might have been called to her, but he went down; without his coat, and his sick-room slippers on. Naturally, when he saw the young lady, it took him aback.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I hope you will not deem me an intruder. I have just got here."

Blair stared nearly as much as the cook. The face was so pleasant, the voice so refined, that he inwardly called himself a fool for showing himself to her in that trim. For once his speech failed him; a thing

Blair's had never done at mathematics, I can tell you; he had not the smallest notion who she was or what she wanted. And it seemed that the silence frightened her.

"Am I too late?" she asked, her face growing white. "Has the—the worst happened?"

"Happened to what?" questioned Blair, for he never once thought of the sick fellow above, and was all at sea. "Pardon me, young lady, but I do not know what it is you are speaking of."

"Of my brother, Edward Sanker. Oh, sir! is he dead?"

"Miss Sanker! Truly I beg your pardon for my stupidity. He is out of danger; he is getting well."

She sat down for a minute on the old stone bench beyond the door, rough with the crowd of boys' names cut in it. Her lips were shaking just a little, and the soft brown eyes had tears in them; but the face was breaking into a glad smile.

"Oh, Dr. Frost, thank you, thank you! Somehow, I never thought of him as dead until this minute, and it startled me."

Fancy her taking him for Frost! Blair was a good-looking fellow under thirty, slender, and well made. The Doctor stood out an old guy of fifty, with a red face and black knee-breeches.

"My mother had your letter, sir, but she was not able to come. My father is very ill, needing her attention every moment; she strove to see on which side her duty lay—to stay with him, or to come to Edward; and she thought it must lie in remaining with him. So she sent me. I left Wales last night."

"Is Mr. Sanker's a fever, too?" asked Blair, in wonder.

"No, an accident. He was hurt in the mine."

It was odd that it should be so; the two illnesses occurring at the same time! Mr. Sanker fell from the shaft; his leg was broken, and there were other hurts. At first they were afraid for him.

Blair was struck into a dilemma. He'd not have minded Mrs. Sanker; but he did not know much about young ladies: he was not accustomed to them. She got up from the bench.

"Mamma bade me say to you, Dr. Frost——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Blair again, "I am not Dr. Frost; he went to London this morning. My name is Blair—one of the school's masters. Will you walk in?"

He shut her into the parlour on his way to call Hall, and to put on his boots and coat. Seeing me, he turned into the school-room.

"Ludlow, are not the Sankers connections of yours?"

"Not of mine. Of Mrs. Todhetley's."

"It's all the same. You go in and talk to her. I don't know what on earth to do. She's come to be with Sanker, but she'll not like to stay here with only you and me. If the Doctor were at home it would be different."

"She seems an uncommon nice girl, Mr. Blair."

"Good gracious! The Doctor told me he had written some days ago, but supposed Mrs. Sanker could not make it convenient to come; and yesterday he wrote again, saying there was no necessity for it, as Sanker was out of danger. I don't know what on earth to do with her," repeated Mr. Blair, who had a habit of getting hopelessly bewildered on occasions. "Hall! Where's Mrs. Hall?"

As he went along the flagged passage calling out, a boy came whistling to the door, carrying a big carpet-bag; Miss Sanker's luggage. The coach which she had had to take on leaving the rail put her down half a mile off, and she walked up in the sun, leaving her bag to be brought.

It seemed that we were going in for mistakes. When I went to her, and began to say who I was, she mistook me for Tod. It made me laugh.

"Tod is a great, strong fellow, as tall as Mr. Blair. I am only Johnny Ludlow."

"Edward has told me all about you both," she said, taking my hands, and looking into my face with her nice eyes. "Tod's proud and overbearing, though generous; but you have ever been pleasant with him. I'm afraid I shall begin to call you 'Johnny' at once."

"Nobody ever calls me anything else; except the masters here."

"You must have heard of me—Mary?"

"But you are not Mary?"

"Yes, I am."

That she was telling truth any fellow might see, and yet at first I hardly believed her. Sanker had told us his sister Mary was beautiful as an angel. *Her* face had no beauty in it, so to say; it was only kind, and nice, and loving. People called Mrs. Parrifer a beautiful woman; perhaps I had taken my notions of beauty from her: she had a Roman nose and great big eyes that rolled about, and a gruff voice, and a lovely peach-and-white complexion (but people said it was paint), and looked three parts a fool. Mary Sanker was just the opposite to all this, and her cheeks were dimpled. But still she had not what people call beauty.

"May I go up and see Edward?"

"I should think so: Mr. Blair, I suppose, will be back directly. He is looking very bad: you will not be frightened at him?"

"After picturing him in my mind as dead, he will not frighten me, however ill he may look."

"I should say the young lady had better take off her bonnet afore going in. Young Mr. Sanker haven't seen bonnets of late, and might be scared."

This interruption came from Hall; we turned, and saw her standing there. She spoke in a resentful tone, as if Miss Sanker had offended

her; and no doubt she had, by coming when the house was not in company order, and had nothing better to send in for dinner but cold mutton and the left half of a rhubarb pie. Hall would have to get the mutton hashed now, which she'd never have done for me and Blair.

"Yes, if you please; I should much like to take my bonnet off," said Miss Sanker, going to Hall, with a smile. "I think you must be Mrs. Hall. My brother has talked of you."

Hall took her to a room, and presently she came forth all fresh and nice, the travelling dust gone, and her bright brown hair smooth and shining. Her grey dress was soft, would not disturb a sick room; it had a bit of white lace round the throat and at the wrists, and a little pearl brooch in front. She was twenty-one last birthday, but she did not look as much.

Blair had been in to prepare Sanker, and his great eyes (only great since his illness) were staring out for her with a wild expectation. You never saw brother and sister less alike: the one so nice, the other ugly enough to frighten the crows. Sanker had got my hand clasped tight in his, when she stooped to kiss him. I don't think he knew of it; but I could not get away. In that minute I saw how fond they were of each other.

"Could not the mother come, Mary?"

"No, papa is—is not well," she said, for of course she would not tell him yet of any accident. Papa wanted her there, and you wanted her here; she thought her duty lay at home, and she was not afraid but that God would raise up friends to take care of you."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Some complicated illness or other," Mary Sanker answered, in a careless tone. "He was a little better when I came away. You have been very ill, Edward."

He held up his wasted hand as proof, with a half smile; but it fell again.

"I don't believe I should have pulled through it at all, Mary, but for Blair."

"That's the gentleman I saw. The one without a coat. Has he nursed you?"

Sanker made a motion with his white lips. "Right well, too. He, and Hall, and Johnny here. Old Hall is as good as gold when any of us are ill."

"And pays herself out by being tarter than ever below," I couldn't help saying, for it was the truth.

"Blair saved Todhetley's life," Sanker went on. "We used to call him Baked Pie before, and give him all the trouble we could."

"Ought you to talk, Edward?"

"It is your coming that seems to give me strength for it," he answered. "I did not know that Frost had written home."

"There was a delay in the letters, or I might have been here three days ago," said Miss Sanker, speaking in a penitent tone, as if she were in the habit of taking other people's faults upon herself. "While papa is not well, the clerk down at the mine opens the business letters. Seeing one directed to papa privately, he neither spoke of it nor sent it up, and for three days it lay unopened."

Sanker had gone off into one of his weak fits before she finished speaking: lying with his eyes and mouth wide open, between sleep and wake. Hall came in, and said, with a tone that snapped Miss Sanker up, it *wouldn't do*: if people could not be there without talking, they must not be there at all. I don't say but what she was a capable nurse, or that when a fellow was downright ill, she spared the wine in the arrow-root, and the sugar in the tea. Mary Sanker sat down by the bed-side, her fingers on her lips to show that she meant to keep silence.

We had visitors later. Mrs. Vale came over, as she did most days, to see how Sanker was getting on; and Bill Whitney brought his mother. Mrs. Vale told Mary Sanker that she had better sleep at the Farm, as the Doctor was away; she'd give her a nice room and make her comfortable. Upon that, Lady Whitney offered a spacious bed and dressing-room at the Hall. Mary thanked them both, saying how kind they were to be so friendly with a stranger; but thought she must go to the Farm, as it would be within a nice walk night and morning. Bill spoke up, and said the carriage could fetch and bring her; but Vale Farm was fixed upon; and when night came, I went with her to show her the way.

"That's the water they went into, Miss Sanker; and that's the very spot, behind the trees." She shivered just a little as she looked, but did not say much. Mrs. Vale met us at the door, and the old lady kissed Mary and told her she was a good girl to come fearlessly all the way alone from Wales to nurse her sick brother. When Mary came back the next morning, she said they had given her such a beautiful room, the dimity window and bed curtains whiter than snow, and the sheets sweet with lavender.

Her going out to sleep appeased Hall;—that, or something else. She was gracious all day, and sent us in two fowls for dinner. Mr. Blair cut them up and helped us. He had written to tell Dr. Frost in London of Miss Sanker's arrival, and while we were at table a telegram came back, saying Mrs. Hall was to take care of Miss Sanker, and make her comfortable.

It went on so for three or four days; Mary sleeping at the Farm, and coming home in the morning. Sanker got well enough to be taken to a sofa in the pretty room that poor Mrs. Frost sat in nearly to the last; and we were all four growing very jolly, as intimate as if we'd known each other as infants. I had taken to call her Mary, hearing Sanker do it so often; and twice the name slipped accidentally out of Mr

Blair. The news from Wales was better and better. For visitors we had Mrs. Vale, Lady Whitney and Bill, and old Featherston. Some of them came every day. Dr. Frost was detained in London. The trial did not come on so soon as it was put down for; when it did, it lasted a week, and the witnesses had to stay. He had written to Mary, telling her to make herself quite happy for she was in good hands. He also wrote to Mrs. Vale, and to Hall.

Well, it was either the fourth or fifth day, I know it was on Monday, and at five o'clock we were having tea for the first time in Sanker's sitting-room, the table drawn near the sofa, and Mary pouring it out. It was the hottest of hot weather, the window was up as high as it would go, but not a breath of air came in at it. Therefore, to see Blair begin to shake as if he were taken with an ague fit, was something unexplainable. His face looked grey, his ears and hands had turned a kind of bluish white.

"Halloa!" said Sanker, the first to see him. "What's the matter, sir?"

Blair got up, and sat down again, his limbs shaking, his teeth chattering. Mary Sanker hastily put some of the hot tea into a saucer, and held it to his lips. His teeth rattled against the china; I thought they'd bite a piece out of it; and in trying to take the saucer from Miss Sanker to hold it himself, the tea was shaken over on the carpet.

"Just you call Mrs. Hall, Johnny," said Sanker, who had propped himself up on his elbow to stare.

Hall came, and Mr. Featherston came; but they could not make out otherwise than that Blair had had a shaking-fit. He was all right again (except for a burning heat); but the doctor, given naturally to croak (or he'd not have got so frightened about Sanker when Mr. Carden was telegraphed for), said he hoped the mathematical master had not set in for fever.

He had set in for something. That was clear. The shaking-fits took him now and again, giving place to low fever. Featherston was not sure whether it had a "typhoid character" or not, he said; but the suspicion was quite enough, and our visitors fell off. Mrs. Vale was the only one who came; she laughed at supposing she could be afraid of it. So there we were still, us four; prisoners, as may be said; with some fever amid us that perhaps might have a typhoid character. Mr. Featherston said (or Hall, I forget which) that it must have been smouldering within him ever since the Sunday night when he jumped into the river. And Blair thought so himself.

Don't imagine he was ill as Sanker had been. Nothing of the kind. He got up every morning, and was in Mrs. Frost's sitting-room with us till evening: but he grew nearly the rat Sanker was for weakness, and wanted pretty nigh as much waiting on. Sometimes his hands were like a burning fire-coal; sometimes so cold that Mary would take them

in hers to try and rub into their veins a little life. She was the gentlest nurse possible, and did not seem to think anything more of waiting on him than on her brother. Mrs. Hall would stand by and say there was nothing left for her to do.

One day Lady Whitney came over, braving the typhoid character, and asked to see Miss Sanker in the great drawing-room, where she stood sniffing at a bottle of aromatic vinegar.

"My dear," she said, when Mary went to her, "I do not think this is at all a desirable position that you are placed in. I should not exactly like it for one of my own daughters. Mr. Blair is a very gentlemanly man, and all that, with quite proper feelings no doubt; but sitting with him in sickness is altogether different from sitting with your brother. Featherston tells me there's little or no danger of infection, and I have come to take you back to the Hall with me."

But Mary would not go. It was not the position she should have voluntarily chosen, but circumstances had led her into it, and she thought her duty lay in staying where she was at present, was the substance of her answer. Mr. Blair had nursed her brother through his dangerous illness, and it would be cruelly ungrateful to leave him, now that he was ill himself. It seemed a duty thrown expressly in her way, she added; and her mother approved of what she was doing.

So Lady Whitney went away (leaving the bottle of aromatic vinegar as a present for the sick-room) three parts convinced. Any way, she said to them when she got home, Mary Sanker was a sweet, good girl, trustworthy to her fingers' ends.

I'm sure she was like sunshine in the room, and read to us out of the Bible just as Harry Vale's fine old grandmother might have done. The first day that Sanker took a drive in a fly, he was tired, and went to bed and to sleep at tea-time. Towards sunset, before I walked with her to the Farm, Mary got the Book as usual, and then hesitated, as if in doubt whether to presume to read or not, Sanker being away.

"Oh yes; yes if you please," said Mr. Blair.

She began the tenth chapter of St. John. It's a passably long one, as everybody knows; and when she laid the Book down again, Blair had got his eyes shut, and his head resting on the back of the easy chair where he generally sat. His face never looked stiller or whiter: I glanced at Mary and she at me; we thought he was worse, and she went up to him.

"I ought not to have read so long a chapter," she gently said. "I fear you are feeling worse."

"No, I was only thinking. Thinking what an angel you are," he added in a low, impassioned, and yet reverent tone, as he bent forward to look up in her face, and took both her hands to hold for a moment in his.

She drew them away at once, saying as she passed me that she was

going to get her bonnet on, and should be ready in a minute. Of course it might have been the reflection of the crimson sun-clouds, but I never saw any face in such a glow in all my life.

The next move old Featherston made, was to decide that the fever had *not* a typhoid character; and visitors came about us again. It was something like opening a public-house after a tide of closing: all the Whitneys flocked in together, except Sir John, who was up in town for parliament. Mrs. Hall was uncommonly short with everybody. She had said from the first there was nothing infectious in the fever, told Featherston so to his face, and resented people's having stayed away. I wrote home to tell them. On the Saturday Dr. Frost arrived, and we were glad to see him. Blair was getting rather better then.

"Well, that Sunday night's plunge in the water has taken out its revenge!" remarked Dr. Frost. "It only wants Todhetley and Vale to follow suit."

But neither of them had the least intention of doing so. On the Monday Tod arrived to surprise us, strong as ever. The Squire had trusted him to drive the horses: you should have seen them spanking in at the gate of Worcester House, pawing the gravel, as Tod in the high carriage, the ribbons in his hands, and Giles the groom beside him, brought them up beautifully to the door. Some called Tod ugly, saying his features were strong; but I know he promised to be the finest man in our two counties.

He conveyed an invitation for the sick and the well. When the two invalids were able to get to Dyke Manor, Mr. and Mr. Todhetley expected to see them, for change of air. Mary Sanker and I were to go as soon as we liked. Which we did in a few days, and were followed by Sanker and Mr. Blair; both able to help themselves then, and getting well all one way.

It did not surprise people very much to hear that the mathematical master and Mary Sanker had fallen in love with one another. He (as Bill Whitney's mother had put it) was gentlemanly; a good-looking fellow to boot: and you have heard what *she* was. The next week but one after arriving at Dyke Manor, he took Mrs. Todhetley into his confidence, though he had said nothing to Mary. They would be sure to marry in the end, she privately told the Squire, for the likeness in their faces to each other struck her at first sight.

"Mary will not have a shilling, Mr. Blair; she will go to her husband (whenever she shall marry) with even a very poor outfit," Mrs. Todhetley explained, wishing Blair fully to understand things. "Her father, Philip Sanker, was a gentleman bred and born, but his patrimony was small. He was persuaded to embark it in a Welsh mine, and lost all. Report said some roguery was at work, but I don't know that it was. It ended in his becoming the overlooker on the very same mine, at a salary so small that they could hardly have reared their

family anywhere but in Wales. Mary does not play, or draw, you see; she has no accomplishments."

"She has what is a great deal better; she does not want them," answered Blair, his pale face lighting up.

"In point of fact, the Sankers—as I fancy—have sacrificed the girls' interests to the boys; they of course must have a thorough education," remarked Mrs. Todhetley. "They are good people, both; you could not fail to like them. I sometimes think, Mr. Blair, that the children of these refined men and women (and Philip Sanker and his wife are that), compelled to live closely and to look at every sixpence before it is spent, turn out all the better for it."

"I am sure they do," answered Blair, earnestly. "It was my own case."

Taking Mrs. Todhetley into confidence meant as to his means as well as his love. He had saved a little money during the eight years he had been at work for himself—about two hundred pounds. It might be possible, he thought, to take to a school with this, and set up a tent at once: he and Mary. Mrs. Todhetley shook her head; she could make as much of small sums as anybody, but fancied this would be scarcely enough for what he wished.

"There would be the furniture," she ventured to say with some hesitation, not liking to damp him.

"I think that is often included in the purchase-money for the good will," said Blair.

He had been acting on this notion before speaking to Mrs. Todhetley, and a friend of his in London, the Reverend Mr. Lockett, was already looking out for any schools that might be in the market. In a few days news came down of one to be disposed in the neighbourhood of London. Mr. Lockett thought it was as desirable an investment as Blair was likely to find, he wrote word: only, the purchase-money, inclusive of furniture, was four hundred pounds instead of two.

"It is of no use to think of it," said Mr. Blair, pushing his curly hair (they used to say he was vain of it at Frost's) off his perplexed brow. "My two hundred pounds will not go far towards that."

"It seems to me that the first step will be to go up and see the place," remarked Mrs. Todhetley. "If what Mr. Lockett says of the school be true, that is, if the people who have the disposal of it are not deceiving him, it must be a very good thing."

"I suppose you mean that the half of the purchase-money should remain on it as a mortgage, to be paid off later," cried Blair, seizing on the idea and brightening up.

"No; not exactly," said Mrs. Todhetley, getting as red as a rose, for she did not like to tell him what she did mean; it looked rather like a conspiracy.

"Look here, Blair," cried the Squire, laying hold of him in the

garden by the button-hole, "I will see about the other two hundred. You go up, and make enquiries on the spot; and perhaps I'll go too; I should like a run; and if the affair is worth your while, we'll pay the money down on the nail, and so have done with it."

It was Blair's turn to get red now. "Do you mean, sir, that you—that you—would advance the half of the money? But it would be too generous. I have no claim on you——"

"No claim on me!" burst forth the Squire, pinning him against the wall of the pigeon-house in a passion, "No claim on me! When you saved my son from drowning but a few weeks ago! And got an ague-fever through it! No claim on me! What next will you say?"

"But that was nothing, sir. Any man, with the commonest feelings of humanity, would jump into the water if he saw a fellow-creature sinking."

"Commonest fiddlestick," roared the Squire. "If this school is one likely to answer your purpose, you put down your two hundred pounds, and I'll see to the rest. There! We'll go up to-day."

"Oh, sir, I never expected this. Perhaps in a year or two I shall be able to pay the money back: but the goodness I never can."

"Don't you trouble your head about paying me back till you're asked to do it," retorted the Squire, mortally offended at the notion. "If you are too proud to take it and say nothing about it, I'll give it to Mary Sanker instead of you. I will, too. Mind sir! that half shall be your wife's, not yours."

If you'll believe me, there were tears in old Blair's eyes. He was but soft at times. The Squire gave him another thrust, which nearly sent in the pigeon-house, and then walked off with his head up and his nankeen coat-skirts held out behind, to watch Drew give the green-meat to the pigs. Blair, he got over his push, and went to find Miss Mary, his thin cheeks alight with a spot as red as Sanker's had worn when his illness was coming on.

They went up to London that day. The Squire had plenty of sense when he chose to bring it out; and instead of trusting to his own investigation and Blair's (which would have been likeliest thing for him to do in general) he took a lawyer to the spot.

It proved to be all right. The gentleman giving up the school had made some money at it, and was going abroad to his friends who had settled in Queensland. Any efficient man, he said to the Squire, able to *keep* the pupils when once he had secured them, could not fail to do well at it. The clergyman, Mr. Lockett, had called on one or two of the parents, who confirmed what was asserted. Altogether it was a straightforward, fair thing: but they'd not bate a shilling of the four hundred pounds.

The Squire concluded the bargain on the spot, for other applicants were after it, and there was danger in delay. He came back to Dyke

Manor ; and the next thing he did was to accompany Mary Sanker home, and tell the news there.

Mr. Blair stayed in London to take possession, and get things in order. He had but time for a few days' flying visit to Mr. and Mrs. Sanker in Wales before opening his new school. There was no opposition there : people are apt to judge of prospects according to their own circumstances ; and they seemed to think it a good offer for Mary.

There was no opposition anywhere. Dr. Frost got a new mathematical master without trouble, and sent Blair his best wishes and a full set of albatra spoons and forks of all sizes, engraved with the initials P. M. B. He was wise enough to lay out the sum he wished to give in useful things, instead of a silver tea-pot or any grand article of that kind, which would not be brought to light once in a year.

Blair cribbed a week's holiday at Michaelmas, and went down to be married. We saw them at the week's end as they passed through Worcester station. Mary looked the same sweet girl as ever, in the same quiet grey dress (or another that was related to it), and Blair was jolly. He clasped hold of the Squire's hands as if he wanted to take them with him. We handed in a big basket of nectarines and grapes from Mrs. Todhetley ; and Mary's nice face smiled and nodded her thanks to the last, as the train puffed on.

"Good luck to them !" said Tod.

Good luck to them ! You'll hear what luck they had.

For this is *not* the end of that Sunday night's work, or it would have hardly been worth relating, seeing that people get married every day, and nobody thinks cheese of it but themselves. The end has to come. And I knew from the first it could not all be got into one paper.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



CLARIORA.

THE cold moon sleeps on rimy hill,
 The dead leaves moulder in the shade ;
 The house-birds nestle, dumb and still,
 On branches bare of bud and blade.
 The world seems drooping to decay.
 Have patience, nay ;
 The world grows fairer every day.

The solemn woods wake mournful dirge,
 Where slumber, ice-bound, herb and leaf ;
 The snow might be a fun'ral serge
 Were't not too beautiful for grief.
 The world seems sleeping life away—
 Have patience, nay ;
 The world grows brighter every day.

As faint stars tremble in the morn,
 And wane into the wak'ning skies—
 So pass to rest the weary-worn,
 While sunlight beams on opening eyes.
 The world is in its morning gray ;
 As wise men say—
 The world grows fairer every day.

Pale shadows on the face of time,
 Past forms fall faintly more and more,
 While each new moment teems sublime
 With life still lovelier than before.
 The world soars gleaming on its way
 With purer ray—
 The world grows fairer every day.

The last weak sigh of yielded strife
 To fresh existence gives the breath ;
 A thousand germs of vivid life
 Lie hidden in the dusk of death.
 The world is drooping to decay !—
 Have patience, pray ;
 The world grows younger every day.

WILLIAM DUTHIE.

A FEW DAYS.

PART I.

HE had often promised to give it me, and as often delayed it upon the slightest excuse; but on my nineteenth birthday, as I sat in the low window of his study, looking out on the falling leaves and the cheerlessness of the October afternoon, he came up to me quietly, and put a book into my hand.

"The pages are turned, and I have marked what you may read."

He went back to his writing, and I leaned forward in my corner and opened the book nervously. It was a Diary, as I had guessed, filled with a small, delicate handwriting. I turned to the first leaf that was doubled, and read in the silent room:—

Monday, July 23rd.—Nat was detained by some kind of a vestry-meeting, and so he asked me to go to the station to meet his new pupil; and, because it was such a lovely afternoon, I chose to walk through the fields, and send Joseph to meet me there with the pony-carriage, in case the boy should be tired. Letitia was in her greenhouse, rather cramped in her movements as usual, for it is only like a swollen cucumber frame, and she has grown quite portly since she came to keep house for Nat. My dear old sister—dear as if our mothers had been one—dear almost as Nat—how truly I love you, though I give you trouble often! She called me as I came out to ask why I had put on my best hat to walk in the lanes.

"I want to look fascinating, Lettie. The station-master's wife, you know, is a very stylish person."

"The people will think you very extravagant. They all know what Nat's living is worth, you may be sure."

"This hat cost very little except an afternoon's work," I answered, turning it round on my hand; "If they stare I will tell them so."

"Put it on, Miss Madeleine; give it every advantage."

I tried not to blush; I tried to turn unconcernedly as Mr. Cumberland came out of the little shrubby walk.

"Do you like it?" I said, putting it on and turning slowly and gravely round to exhibit it.

His eyes danced with fun. "Is it not rather gay for a clergyman's sister?"

"Should I be wiser or better, or do more good, if I took this out?" I said, touching the little buff feather that curled over the velvet in front; "or would the parish love me more if it were black?"

"They might," Mr. Cumberland answered, with his head on one side. "The effect of those great brown eyes is in itself so discomposing that it might be wise to encourage sobriety of attire."

"Just what I tell her," said Lettie laughing: "but now you had better start, May."

"Good-bye then," and I held out my hand to Errol Cumberland. He took it, looking into my face with a strange, long look: then dropped it with a little smile.

"I will come, too," he said. "I feel inclined for an early introduction to Master Carson. I'm sure he's thin and studious, and that Nat will work him into a premature grave." And raising his hat to Lettie as he spoke, we passed through the gate and into the fields.

"So my parishioners are afraid of me, Mr. Cumberland?" I asked, looking up at him.

"I don't know them," he answered, coolly. "Nat's are."

"May I ask why?"

"Because, Miss Madeleine, you go into quiet, orderly houses, and make the children noisy; because you go into sick-rooms and talk when any one else would be silent; because you address tipsy men when they ought to be treated with silent scorn; because you take restless children out to play in the fields when it would be more advisable that they should view life from the lofty elevation of a high-backed chair; because, in short, you do just the things no other girl would think of doing."

"And I suppose it is as much as the gentleman at the Towers can accomplish to undo the mischief effected by the Rector's sister."

"He cannot undo it; I assure you he cannot."

"But he generously tries, I have no doubt," I said, and then we quarrelled as we generally do, half in jest half in earnest, until we turned into the shady lane about a mile from the station. After a time, when he began to tell me of things he wished and intended to do, I grew silent, for I could not help feeling my helplessness and his great power; until at last I told him,—rather passionately, I'm afraid,—that it was unkind to show me the pleasure that was out of my reach.

"Why out of your reach?" he said.

"You know—you know how poor we are."

"Poor? nonsense; I look upon Nat Blackwood as the wealthiest man in this county, or the next."

He had said it rather nervously, but when I looked up to ask why, he would not reply. I dropped the subject, for I am sure it is painful to him, because his father is so rich and so miserly; doing nothing—help-

ing no one. Poor Errol ! But what great unheard of good he will do when the power is his !

"Well ?" he asked, looking down at me questioningly.

"I don't mind it at all," I returned, "so long as the people love him : and they cannot help loving Nat."

We sauntered on among the wild roses. His voice was very grave when he asked, after a little pause : "Is it because they cannot help it that they love his sister so ?"

"No ; because they are very kind and very warm-hearted."

"Or is it because," he continued, with a deep light in his eyes, "because she comes to everybody, like a pleasant light ? Madeleine, my love, my darling, come and help me too !"

I stood before him, trembling painfully, my eyes fixed on him with a questioning incredulity, half-frightened of the anxious look upon his face.

"Mayda, I have loved you for a long, long time ; I cannot tell you how. I seem to have no feeling apart from my love for you. Speak to me one word, my gentle love."

But I could not. I could only cover my face, too much surprised to be glad or grateful. He took my hands down gently, and laid my head upon his breast, then whispered low and breathlessly : "Can you understand the love I bear you ?"

"It is all unreal I ; cannot believe it yet. Errol, do you really love me so ?" I rested a moment, silent in my overpowering happiness ; then I asked him nervously, and rather incoherently, Did he know what he had done ? had he thought what he had done ?

"I have thought," he answered, with a bright, glad smile, "that unless one wild little girl will be my wife, I care not what becomes of me."

We had stood some minutes on the platform before the train came lazily up ; not even an engine will hurry through Ashley.

"There he is," I whispered, "stout and pale, pensively chewing some cake. Stay and see if he rouses himself to look for anybody."

He came down with much caution, pocketing carefully the remains of his cake, and looked round rather anxiously.

"Are you Ben Carson ?" I asked, going forward, and holding out my hand.

"Yes."

"That's right. I'm Mr. Blackwood's sister, and am come to take you home—to Ashley Rectory."

Errol came and settled us comfortably, saying a few light, pleasant things to this apparently heavy and unpleasant boy ; then, as he put the rug round me with a proud, gentle smile, he told me to drive carefully, for he had an interest in the carriage now.

I cannot say we any of us much admire Ben Carson yet. Viewed artistically, he is ungraceful ; viewed domestically, he appears insatiable :

but it is hard to judge him to-night, poor little fellow. I dare say presently we shall like him very much ; I will try to make his new home pleasant to him, though Nat would do that for any one. It was such a quiet, peaceful night, that after tea Nat and I strolled out together, and walked up and down the lawn, arm-in-arm, while I told him of my joy. He kissed me ; then he told me he had seen it for a long time, and that Errol would be very happy. He went in soon after, and I followed, to see that Ben went comfortably to bed. Then the resting twilight tempted me once more, and taking up the first cap I saw, which happened to be Ben's, I put it on, and wandered down the little lawn again. I started, hearing the gate open, and stood face to face with Errol. He bent down to my face, laughing.

"Another new hat ! My poor £12,000 a year will become penury directly, with this extravagance, Miss Blackwood."

"Now, Errol, could I have a more serviceable article than this ? Why I was just thinking how it would please the parish in general."

"And the lord of the manor, in particular ?"

"*Being* particular, yes. Does it ?"

He bent down still lower with my hands in his, his words so low and quick, I could hardly understand. "Madeleine, I could not rest in my happiness. I was obliged to come and hear it once more. To think that the weary suspense is over, and that to-day has brought me my blessing ! Oh, I thank God again and again for this, my darling love ! Speak to me, sweet-heart, that I may know all this is real !"

"I am very real, Errol, here beside you, telling you how happy your love has made me."

We stood a long time silent, I looking off among the trees to where the moon was rising ; he—ah ! well, I had learned long ago to know when his eyes were on me, though I had so lately known the meaning of their earnest gaze. Presently I said, looking up with a smile—a faint, half-smile it was, for his great earnestness made me feel grave and quiet, "You never asked how we got home."

"Well, I conclude by your sporting the pupil's cap, that he is a pupil still, and not a mangled remains. What did you do with the infant phenomenon ?"

"Discoursed freely and intelligently, then made fast friends over an amateur boar-hunt."

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, the pig had admitted himself gratuitously into the garden, so we devoted ourselves to him on our arrival, and we shall never be stiff again. He is a nice boy, I do believe, with a good, honest, truthful nature, but not an enlightened young person. Just fancy my feelings when, after insanely trying to make conversation by asking him how he liked Cornwall—of which he could have but a limited experience, the

first hour of his acquaintance with it—he told me he had spent his last holidays in Dublin, but he so little relished his sensations on the journey that if he ever went again he should certainly go by land! Don't laugh. I did not really, but it is rich! I must run and tell Nat, for I quite forgot. Good-night. I *must* go now."

But I stood and watched him out of sight. There was a strange gentleness everywhere on everything to-night, and though I say now how beautiful he looked in the fading twilight, that was not my thought as he turned for his last nod and good-bye.

Monday, August 6th.—Errol came over to walk with me to the school, as it is the day I give the children a singing-lesson, and while we waited for the work Letitia was cutting out, which we were to take, we sauntered in the kitchen-garden, regaling ourselves upon gooseberries. Somehow the conversation turned upon old Mr. Cumberland, and the little he gives away.

"Are *you* ever scolded for what *you* give away, Errol?"

"Always."

"Then you must be scolded a great deal. But I suppose men don't mind."

"Were you ever scolded, Mayda?"

"Very, very often, though not so much as I deserved, I believe."

"By whom?"

"Do you know a name that might be set to the music of a sneeze?" And then I said it in a sneeze so naturally that Letitia answered from the garden, and joined us while we were laughing.

"Now Errol, come to the warbling, and then you must question the boys."

"May I question the girls, too, including you?"

"It would not be a very brilliant examination to-day. Why, Errol, life itself is a burden almost too heavy to be borne this weather. My little mind, (though a kingdom, too, in its way,) would close itself to all your logic, in this sun. The shadow of the honour would be more acceptable."

After all, I don't believe we thought much of the heat on the road, and as we came back the other way the cool fresh breeze blew on us from the sea. The old grand walk over the cliffs—the old summer sunshine lying lazily on the cove—the old game of frightening each other among the rocks, by our daring, out upon the points—the old goodly view of still, white ships as we sat resting on the heather, looking out across the Channel—the old, old thoughts and fancies, perhaps, as we stood where we always stop involuntarily among the furze and flowers, where we can see miles of land and sea, all beautiful, and at rest, on a summer evening such as this. We gazed and loitered, unwilling, in this bright and pleasant light, to bring our walk to an end. But

we reached the Rectory-gate at last, and said good-bye. Before he closed the gate he called me back.

"Mayda, you make me forget everything. Mrs. Mark has made up her mind at last. She is bringing her daughter to Ashley Cottage after all; she says the advantages of the sea-air will counterbalance the inconveniences she anticipates. I wonder what they are to be, for the cottage is one of the most perfect little places I know. They arrive this evening, and I have the pleasant task of the reception."

"I suppose they will be with you a great deal."

"I suppose so."

"Don't they say Miss Mark is very beautiful?"

"Most beautiful. Madeleine, run down to the gate to-night after tea. I must only be away a minute. Good-bye."

When tea was over, and Lettie sitting at the open window, making the most of the fading light; Nat playing, as he generally does before his night's writing begins; Ben gone up to bed not feeling very well; I stole out and ran down to the gate. Errol was coming along the lane whistling softly. "Ah! little white ghost, shall you vanish if I touch you? Mayda," his voice changed suddenly, "can I bind you to me more than you *are* bound?"

"Never, Errol."

"Then we will not look upon it in that light; but I am so proud of my gift, so proud of my blessing, that I would show every one that I have won it, and hold it mine." He had taken my left hand in his, and put a ring upon my finger; then he gave it a long kiss. "May it stay until I put another in its place." And I don't know what I had said when he was going.

"They are come," he called out carelessly, knowing my cheeks were too hot for me to venture to look up. "I hardly saw them properly, but I fancy Ida is as beautiful as report saith," and he was gone.

With a burning face I stood beside Nat, at the piano, and laid the hand with the diamonds on it upon his. He touched it gently, but his face was rather sad. "Madeleine, you will have no money troubles, then, as you have had with me. I think Nature has made a mistake; you should have married a poor man to show what poverty may be."

We joined Lettie, and she kissed me too, and said a few kind words. Then I went upstairs with a cooling draught for Ben. He was lying dressed upon his bed, humming, with very little tune I must confess, "Oh dear, what can the matter be." Thinking it would be rather difficult to tell, I got him into bed. And now that the house is still, I can hear his breathing, quick and irregular even in his sleep; for I am writing at his bedside. I could not rest if I fancied him wakeful and in pain, poor boy. The light—half-hidden—shines upon my diamonds and their brightness is in my heart. I pray God help me to be worthy of the love they tell of.

Wednesday, August 8th.—Ben is worse, but Dr. Peters is very reassuring, and says he is not at all surprised at the way the poor boy wanders in his talk. I told him how Ben is perpetually fancying himself Christian on his pilgrimage, and that he cannot get the wicket-gate open; but he only laughed. This afternoon Nat called at Ashley Cottage. He says the rooms are most comfortable, but that Mrs. Mark complains of it a good deal; surely she need not, in that pleasant spot! He thinks Miss Mark very lovely, but cold and stiff. I'm afraid I cannot like her if she is. Errol was there when he went, and he left him there. Of course, he is trying to make them feel less strange. I did not expect him to call here to-day.

Saturday, August 11th.—Letitia and I went to-day to call on Mrs. Mark and her daughter. I think they were very disagreeable, and I should like never to call again. I am sure they were laughing at Lettie all the time. They could not do so at me very easily, as I kept my eyes wide open and fixed upon one or the other of them. They told us they thought they should find it very dull here, having no entertaining ladies in the neighbourhood. I knew they meant no ladies who would entertain them with dinners and dances, and I thought for one moment of the little dining-room at home, and the small dishes that Lettie helps to cook, and longed to take her away from their contempt.

We maintained a daintily iced conversation until Lettie discovered, as a brilliant idea, that she knew a lady, whose name they mentioned, and she spoke of her in her outspoken, warm-hearted way. Miss Mark gently laid more ice upon it, and disparaged several more poor unoffending people; so that it was an intense relief when Errol became the subject of conversation, and they praised him energetically. Mrs. Mark seems to have very few ideas apart from her pride and her daughter. I think, indeed, the one word might express the two. I was amused to see the way she watched and waited on her, as I was shocked to see the way Ida slighted and contradicted her. I wonder how I should treat my mother if I had one? I am afraid I hated her when I felt that she was lovely enough to excuse her pride as she came out with us, smiling now, in her trailing white dress and soft bright ribbons—so different to me in my plain blue calico. For one minute there was a bitter longing and rebelling in my heart as I felt this difference, and knew how any one must notice it; any one meeting us there, for instance. But better thoughts came soon; and as the footsteps that I knew so well drew near, I stood more closely still beside her. He hastened up to her and shook hands, hardly turning his eyes from her face as he did so afterwards with Lettie and me. Then as we passed through the gate, he raised his hat to us and walked in with her. Who can wonder? We were rather quiet on our way home, and I went at once to Ben's room,

where he is performing a slow recovery. He greeted me cheerfully. "Miss May, I'm so glad you are come; what do you think I have been doing? making something."

"Not a mistake, I hope."

"No, a poem."

"Have you really? show it to me."

"I haven't written it, I must tell it to you:

"When the whispering wind is weary, and lies resting in its race,
Then I murmur for Miss Madeleine with her fair and funny face."

"Oh, famous! Why Ben every line is alliteration."

He smiled complacently, "Not only alliteration, Miss May, but the words all begin with the same letter."

I laughed outright, but Ben is too good-natured to feel hurt at that. When I recovered, I asked him very anxiously, "Had he ever published any poetry?"

"Not quite, Miss May. I sent some to a magazine."

"And didn't they put it in?"

"No, I don't think they had room just then."

"Was it pretty?"

"I think so; it was about a girl."

"Most poems are, Ben; and did you send it anonymously?"

As usual, it was only for a moment that Ben was baffled by the word he did not understand.

"Well, yes,—*rather* anonymously, Miss May," and I was fain to lay my head upon the bed, and laugh once more. How long I wonder will it take Nat to teach him not to make meanings for himself? I raised my head, and asked more gravely than I meant to do, "And so I have a funny face, Ben, have I?"

"Fair *and* funny, don't leave any of it out, please."

"Do you like it, Ben?"

"Don't I, and doesn't everybody? And, Miss Madeleine," Ben lowered his voice respectfully, "doesn't a certain person think it the fairest in all the world, even if he does not think it the funniest—as I do? He loves you just as well as I do."

I smiled a little. "And Ben if he—left off caring for—my face, you would too, I suppose?"

"I should love it more."

"Why?"

"Because—I don't know—it would have a different look, I think."

"More funny?"

"Less funny, and I should be obliged to love it more, however impossible it may seem, if it had a sorrow upon it. But, Miss May, look up! He told me if I troubled you he should take you away, for that he would not have a care upon the fairest face in all the world; and I know he has seen all the great actresses and the princesses."

I hid my face, laughing, once more. A laugh always does me good, so it must have been that which sent me down to dinner hungry and happy. I wonder why Nat seemed so vexed that Errol had neglected some appointment with him; he always used to make ready excuses for him in such a case.

I sat with Ben in the evening; and when I went down to make the tea, I put a bright little rose in my hair, and felt quite sure that somebody would come,—as he did. And I dare say we were earlier than usual, or he would have come at the beginning of tea instead of nearly at the end. He was merry and gentle as ever; it was only my fancy that made him seem rather absent. He did not mention the Marks at first: when he did, he asked me how I had enjoyed my visit.

"I *have* enjoyed things more, once or twice."

"Why?"

"I am afraid I was not sufficiently impressed with the companionship of High Society fully to appreciate the honour; besides which, I did somewhat to make High Society blush."

"Mayda!"

"And yet, no. I remember it did not blush; I remarked, on the contrary, that High Society was so perfectly satisfied with its own height, and so very much too lofty to see small things below it, that it was impossible for it to feel the very sharp and painful kicks it sometimes gave to said small things."

"But May," said Nat, gently, "you would never speak ill of those whom One, who knows best of all what places we can fill, has set above you—simply because they *are* above you?"

"Ah! no, indeed; indeed no. Many of them, most of them, are as much above the petty faults and meannesses of life as they are above its wants and cares."

I hardly knew what I said, thinking of them and of one beside me higher still and yet so different. But the subject did not drop there; Errol began praising Ida's beauty.

"She reminds me," he said presently, glancing I thought rather nervously towards Nat, "of the Old Testament women."

"Not of Jael or Jezebel, surely," I said, demurely, pretending to be engrossed with the sugar for Nat's fourth cup.

"Madeleine!" Lettie looked reprovingly, but Errol went on, only a little put out by my interruption.

"She reminds me of Rachel, I think, and those other grand Old Testament women."

"I hope Miss Mark is not like the generality of them, I said. Would she steal like Rachel, or tell falsehoods like Sarah, or teach her son to do it, like Rebecca, or hanker after the evil like Mrs. Lot, or——"

Nat's eyes stopped me, "Madeleine you are forgetting yourself."

I gave a little forced laugh.

"No, I'm not, Nat dear, only—wherein lies the likeness to Miss Mark, Errol?"

"I meant in appearance only; with that thick, dark hair, and those long, Eastern eyes. She is exactly like the pictures we see of Rebecca, or Ruth, or, as I said before, the generality of the Old Testament women."

"In all of whom," said Nat, quietly, "there was good enough to redeem the evil, which, in itself, generally answered some great purpose of the Divine will."

I remember little else that was said, but Errol's manner was very gentle and quiet when he left us. Ah, me! my little rose is faded, and I am very tired!

Sunday, August 12th.—Perhaps it was because my thoughts have been running a good deal lately on the decorations I contemplate for the Harvest Thanksgiving, and my eyes have grown accustomed to look upon all green luxuriance with an eye to wreaths and arches that made me this morning—as I turned over my music to find a pretty Voluntary with some vain idea of showing off more than usual—give quite a start on my seat, as I glanced at the arched door and fancied some one had sent me a supply towards my decorations at rather an unseemly hour. Only for a moment, I suppose, for I soon distinguished Mrs. Mark's face below the verdure, and a pair of broad green ribbons attaching it to to her venerable chin. I laid my hands on the keys, hurriedly then, that I might not look further, and I played Mozart's *Benedictus* with a nervous trembling in my fingers that I never knew before. Nat was reading the Second Lesson before I looked into the large pew near me. If I thought her beautiful yesterday, I must think her doubly so to-day in her bright, elegant dress, the wonderful dark lashes lying on her pale cheeks, as she bent her eyes upon her book. I ought to be ashamed even to write it here, but I gave my old lavender muslin an angry look, behind the harmonium, and then catching sight of a well-developed patch, I felt an angry lump rise in my throat, and I tapped my foot impatiently as I tried to keep back a wicked tear. I never listened to Nat's sermon this morning. Why couldn't I? But somehow, when he gave out the words,—“And Moses drew near unto the great darkness where God was,” I fell to wondering if it must be always so. Is it only in the great darkness that we draw near unto Him? and wondering that, and fearing that it was so, and hoping that He would be in every darkness, I grew so lost in my own thoughts, that I hardly know at all what Nat said of it. Errol sat in his old corner opposite me in the great pew, and his face had a flush upon it, and his eyes were restless, and he only looked at me once, and that was when I played a fearful chord in the *Venite*, and put all the singers out. The Marks stopped in the churchyard for the carriage, and Nat told them he was going over to

preach at Little Ashley in the afternoon. Errol said, in his old, impulsive way, that he would walk over too. I asked Miss Mark if she were going. "Thank you," she said, coldly, "I do not think I shall care to go so far." Then I knew, quite well, that I should not see the face I loved there, though he said it. I tried to think the walk to Little Ashley as pleasant as in the old times, and I leaned upon Nat's arm, and laughed and talked with him, falling at last into one of our serious, quiet conversations that I love so well. The country had that resting look upon it that it has on summer Sundays, and the peace of it was in our hearts. We stood a long time looking across the sea, while the church-bells chimed in the distance. I wonder why it is that looking on it always stills my hot, rebellious feelings. Is it because it ever must re-echo the wondrous "Peace, be still," breathed once above it, and which cannot die? or is it that, as I have often fancied, the Spirit of God still moves upon the face of the waters? Certainly peace and rest come to me always from the sea. Why should I feel unhappy as I do? 'Tis only seven short weeks since Errol Cumberland, the greatest, truest gentleman in all the land, asked me for my love, and gave me his. Could the love he gave have died so suddenly? Could mine? But I must not judge him by that test. How could I ever be tempted as he is?

As usual, something happened in church to lower me in the estimation of the public. We were singing very slowly and impressively, when some one, feeling the church too warm, opened the door, and with a stately step and lofty bearing, in walked my noble Brutus, whom I had deposited so carefully inside the Vicarage yard to wait for us. He walked up the aisle, sniffing inquisitively, my heart sinking lower at each step. Our door was unlatched, so he coolly pushed it open, walked in, and stood in the middle of the pew. Then he listened attentively for a minute; but the words, or more probably the tune, not meeting with his approbation, he raised his head, and gave a long, low whine, which I believe he would have kept up through the hymn, only that Mrs. Topham, driven apparently to distraction, took up a cushion and chased him. He looked at her while he finished up his wail in a despairing minor key, then he took refuge at my side. Mrs. Topham followed him up, and I kept my eyes on my book, singing serenely, and left the little affair for her to settle. The cushion was in action again, Brutus driven out of the pew, and the door shut. Poor Nat must have been very angry, as of course he would not feel inclined to laugh in the pulpit. Ben would undoubtedly have made a diversion, had he not been peacefully slumbering.

I am writing early to-night. I don't think Errol will come in to tea. Perhaps he may, but I dare say he is at the Cottage, as he knows they find it lonely. It was so hard to sit downstairs, and not to listen for him, that I came away to write. Lettie is reclining in a suspicious manner on the couch, with a comfortable droop in her features, and little

strange sounds issuing apparently from the back of her neck. Nat, too, is enveloped in a lethargy more nearly bordering on somnolence than I should have expected in a person of his parts. So it is better not to rouse them for tea just yet. I will wait a little longer.

I wonder what they are doing over there at the Cottage? The grand old trees around the Towers hide them all from me. Is that the only separation between my life and theirs?

. When I had written so far, I went down, for I heard a step I knew, and in the drawing-room, against the window, in the sunset light, stood Errol, so grand-looking in his evening dress, so handsome with the changing brilliancy in his eyes which made him look withal unlike the Errol Cumberland of old.

"I came for a little talk, Mayda, as I could not go to church. May I have tea with you?" And as I took the keys and made it, my heart was light with happiness.

I told him of my misadventure in Little Ashley Church and he laughed that low, clear laugh of his which seems to make every-one join in it, whether they will or no; then he bent his bright face over my dog, and looked gravely into the intelligent eyes that always brightened at a word from him. "Et tu, Brute!" The sad serious words came so unexpectedly that Nat started, and that made the laugh all the merrier, and we were all very cheerful and happy until tea was over, when Errol seemed to grow absent and quiet. Presently he said, the flush coming back to his face, "You did not say many words to Miss Mark this morning, Madeleine."

"Yes I did, just twice as many as she said to me."

"She is the stranger. You are expected to take the initiative."

"Am I not a stranger too—to her, Errol?"

"But you are at home here; besides, you are never shy."

"Yes I am—with Miss Mark."

"Why?"

"Because she didn't like my bonnet—or jacket—or gloves."

"Nonsense, you know your dress is always perfection: why should you fancy such things?"

"I don't fancy it. I saw it in the elevation of her nostril; and why did she curtsy when she went, and not touch my hand?"

"Why, May, that is not pride. They seldom shake hands at first sight among the sort of people she lives with."

"But this is second sight, and I know it was the gloves, and I don't care for her, but she is very, very beautiful." I felt hot and angry, and brought out each sentence with a jerk.

"She is, indeed," he answered eagerly, "more beautiful than any one I ever saw; is not she, Nat?"

"I don't know all the people you ever saw," said Nat, coldly.

"But is not Miss Mark very beautiful?"

"I would rather have her head in marble at once; then I should not have the disappointment of expecting a change that never comes. I got very weary of its sameness this morning. I would not care a bit about my sermons if all my congregation looked so."

"May," said Errol, rather abruptly, "will you come with us to Porth-with on Tuesday? Ida and I ride, Mrs. Mark and my father drive. Which will you do?"

I felt my eyes burning as if the lids would never close over them again; but I hope I answered naturally when I declined to go at all. He urged me a little, but soon dropped it, and rose to go.

"You will come to the Towers and meet Ida often, won't you? The more you know of her the more you will like her."

"I hope so. Yes, I will come. Good-bye."

Then he went, and the sunset light was gone, leaving the room full of a strange, sad twilight; and the grand old sacred melodies Nat played sounded to me like mournful cries for something lost; till I could bear it no longer, and came to write away my gloomy and impatient thoughts.

(To be concluded next month.)



MRS. HUBBARD'S THREE WARNINGS.

IT was in the days of our grandmothers, when there were brick ovens in the land, that Mr. Hubbard bought his house; and bought it very much against his wife's will. It was a lonely house, and reported to be haunted. It was next to a graveyard, which though unused was not cheerful, and which had likewise the reputation of a ghost. However, Mr. Hubbard did not believe in ghosts, and was too cheerful to be depressed by warnings, and never intended to be lonely.

"Mrs. Hubbard," he said, when his wife shook her head over the purchase, "I got it cheap, and it is a good one. You will like it when you get there. If you don't, why then talk."

So the house was bought, and into it the Hubbard family went. There was scarcely a chance for a ghost to show his face amid such a family of boys and girls. Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard counted ten of them, all noisy ones.

Having once expostulated and spoken out her mind as to the house, Mrs. Hubbard gave up the point. She scrubbed and scoured, tacked down carpets and put up curtains, and owned that the place was pretty. As not a ghost appeared for a week, she made up her mind that there were no such inhabitants; she even began not to mind the tombstones. So the house got to rights at last, and baking day came about. In the

press of business, they had a great deal of baker's bread, and were now tired of it.

Mrs. Hubbard never enjoyed setting a batch of bread to rise as she did that which was to be eaten for the first time in the new house.

"For I cannot get up an appetite for stuff that nobody knows who has had the making of," said Mrs. Hubbard, "and all puffy and alummy besides."

So into the oven went the bread, and out it came at the proper time, even and brown and beautiful as loaves could be. Mrs. Hubbard turned them up on their sides as she drew them forth, and they stood in the long bread-tray, glorious proofs of her skill and the excellence of the oven, when Tommy Hubbard bounded in. Tommy was four; and when at that age we are prone to believe that anything will bear our weight. Tommy, therefore, anxious to inspect the newly-made bread, swung himself off his feet by clutching the edge of the bread-tray, and over it came, loaves and Tommy and all.

Mrs. Hubbard flew to the rescue and picked up the loaves. All were dusted and put in the tray again but one. That lay bottom upwards under the table.

"A bothering child, to give me so much trouble!" she said, as she crawled under the table to get it. "A—O—ah—dear, dear, dear—oh—O my—"

And there on the floor sat Mrs. Hubbard, screaming, wringing her hands and shaking her head. The children screamed in concert. Mr. Hubbard rushed in from the garden where he was at work.

"What's the matter, mother?" he gasped.

Mrs. Hubbard pointed to the bottom of the loaf lying in her lap.

"Look there and see!" she said. "It is a warning, William; I am going to be taken from them all."

And he looked; and he saw a death's-head and cross-bones, as plainly engraved as they possibly could be.

"It is accident," said Mr. Hubbard. "Such queer cranks do come, you know."

But Mrs. Hubbard was in a troubled state of mind, as was but natural.

"The stories about the haunted house were true," she said; "and the spirits have marked the loaf. I am afraid it is a warning."

And the loaf was put aside, for even Mr. Hubbard did not dare to eat any of it.

Mrs. Hubbard got over her fright at last, but the news of the awfully marked loaf spread through R——, and the people came to Hubbard's all the week to look at it. It was a death's-head and cross-bones certainly; every one saw that at a glance, but as to its meaning, people differed. Some believed that it was a warning of approaching death; some thought that the spirits wanted to frighten the Hubbards

away, and get possession of the house again, all to themselves. This latter supposition inspired Mrs. Hubbard with courage; finally, being a brave woman, she adopted the belief, and when another baking day arrived, put her loaves into the oven once more, prepared for cross-bones, and not to be frightened by them. The loaves baked as before. They came out brown and crusty as Mrs. Hubbard turned each in her hands. There were no cross-bones visible, but on the last were sundry characters or letters. What, no one could tell, until there dropped in for a chat a certain printer of the neighbourhood, accustomed to reading things backward.

"By George," said he, "that is curious. That *is* curious—r-e-s-u-r-g-a-m-resurgam; that is what is on the loaf—resurgam."

"It is what they put on tombs, isn't it?" asked poor Mrs. Hubbard, faintly.

"Well, yes," said Mr. Hubbard, being obliged to admit it. "But it is not so bad as cross-bones and skulls."

Mrs. Hubbard shook her head.

"It's even solemn," said the little woman, who was not as good a linguist as bread maker. "I feel confident, William, that I shall soon be resurgamed, and what will these dear children do then?"

And now that the second loaf was before her eyes, marked even more awfully than the first, Mrs. Hubbard grew really pale and thin, and lost her cheerfulness.

"I have a presentiment," she said, over and over again, "that the third baking will decide who the warning belongs to. I believe it is meant for me, and time will show. Don't you see how thin I am growing?"

And though Mr. Hubbard laughed, he also began to be troubled. The third baking day was one of gloom. Solemnly, as at a funeral, the family assembled to assist in the drawing.

Five loaves came out markless; but one remained.

Mrs. Hubbard's hand trembled; but she drew it forth; she laid it on the tray; she turned softly about. At last she exposed the lower surface. On it were letters printed backward, plain enough to read this time, and arranged thus:—

"Died April 2nd,
lamented by
her large family."

"It is me," cried Mrs. Hubbard. "I am to go to-morrow. This is the 1st. I do feel faint. Yes, I do. It is awful, and so sudden."

And Mrs. Hubbard fainted away in the arms of the most terrified of men and husbands.

The children screamed, the cat mewed, the dog barked. The oldest boy ran for the doctor. People flocked to the Hubbards. The loaf was

examined. Yes, there was Mrs. Hubbard's warning—her call to quit this world.

She lay in bed, bidding good-bye to her family and friends, her strength going fast. She read her Bible, and tried not to grieve too much. The doctor shook his head. The clergyman prayed with her. Nobody doubted that her end was at hand, for people were very superstitious in those days.

They had been up all night with good Mrs. Hubbard, and dawn was breaking, and with it she was sure that she must go; when, clattering over the road and up to the door came a horse, and on the horse came a man, who alighted. He rattled the knocker and rushed in. There was no stopping him. Up the stairs he went to Mrs. Hubbard's room, and bolted into it.

Every one stared at him, as he took off his hat.

"Parding," said he, breathlessly, "I heard Mrs Hubbard was a dying—and she'd warnings on her bakings. I came over to explain. You see I was sexton of the church here a few years ago, and I know all about it. You needn't die of fear just yet, Mrs. Hubbard, for it is neither spirits nor devils about; nor yet warnins. What marks the loaves is old Mrs. Finkle's tombstone. I took it for an oven-bottom, seeing there were no survivors, and bricks were dear. The last folks before you didn't get them printed off on their loaves, because they used tins; and we got used to the marks ourselves. Cross-bones and skulls we put up with, and never thought of caring for the resurgam. So you see how it is, and I am sorry you've been scared."

Nobody said a word. The minister shut his book. The doctor walked to the window. There was a deadly silence. Mrs. Hubbard sat up in bed.

"William!" said she to her husband, "the first thing you do, get a new bottom to that oven."

And the tone assured the assemblage of anxious friends that Mrs. Hubbard was not going to die just yet.

Indeed she came down the very next day. And when the oven had been reconstructed, the first thing she did was to give invitations for a large tea-drinking. On which occasion the loaves came out right.



A SKETCH.

FROM various causes, I can now give it you only in the bare outline.

On a cold, bright day in April, I left Paris en route for one of the chief towns of Saxony. "There are several reasons why you should stay until the weather is warmer," said many of my friends. "In the first place, all Paris has had the influenza; you alone have escaped; if you travel in this weather it will not long keep away. Secondly, you are quitting Paris just when you ought to remain; thirdly, you will miss the great event of the season—the ball at the ambassador's, which is to outrival all other balls ever heard of." But these arguments were not sufficient to induce me to alter my mind. I was proof against persuasion, and in the cold gray dawn of a spring morning turned my back upon the capital and its gaities.

My first halting-place was to be Strasburg. "Be sure you make the most of your time in the old place, and stay there as long as you can," said a worthy Frenchman, who had originally come from the ancient cathedral town. "*Les Strasbourriques sont des braves*," he had emphatically continued. "I will give you some introductions that shall go far to prove me true." I accepted an offer which accorded so well with my intentions, and left Paris feeling not quite a homeless, friendless wanderer.

Nothing very worthy of note occurred on the journey. At the first station of importance we alighted for refreshment, and I hastily consumed a cup of coffee, and a roll which I afterwards discovered, to my horror, had contained a sausage. Trichinia was then in full force, and for many months nothing in the shape of pork had passed the lips of the wise and prudent. A fearful state of anxiety naturally ensued, moderated only after many days' careful watchings for symptoms of the enemy. None ever appeared, fortunately; but the sagacious prophecies of my friends proved correct on one point; ere the lapse of many hours I found that the influenza had determined upon being my *compagnon de voyage*. This was a serious drawback; but there are many times in life when we are bound to make the best of things, and the present occasion was one of them.

It did not prevent me from taking admiring notes of the beautiful scenery through which we passed. Unhappily for this sketch they were the only notes I did take; many points of interest, owing perhaps to

the rapid course of the influenza, have left no other records in my mind than those of a pleasant, but vague and dreamy impression. But I cannot forget the romantic and beautiful scenery of the Moselle. Although its blue waters were seen but for a moment, that moment was surely enough to fix it for ever in the memory. "No wonder that poets have raved about thee," I exclaimed, involuntarily. "Some day I will come again and take up my abode here; lodge under the shadow of its trees; listen to the music of its birds; watch the current of the stream; see pictures in its calm reflection, and grow old beneath its kind influences." And since then I have many a time caught myself humming "On the Banks of the Blue Moselle," and discovered a pathos in the melody it once did not possess. But when the days and the months and the years had passed away; when the vision had faded and given place to the pictures of my own land; I knew there was no place like Home. How often we come back to our old love!

Long before we reached Strasburg night had "wrapp'd the earth in her dark though kindly shroud," and I had to draw upon my own resources for occupation. Just then they were limited. Every hour I was growing more feverish and restless from cold; I felt dull and uncompanionable; so that my two fellow-travellers—the one a Frenchman, the other a heavy German—turned to each other for society, and left me to undisturbed repose. Certainly they afforded some amusement. Though possessing but a limited knowledge of each other's language, they were not to be baffled by this slight inconvenience. What failed them in words was more than made up in gesticulations, some of these so frantic that I now and then underwent the risk of a back-handed stroke. The German, at times utterly baffled as to his friend's meaning, would clench and dismiss the matter with an emphatic "Ya! ya!" and a grunt that would have done honour to a whole herd of swine. There, in one small compartment, were we three men, representatives—faithful ones, as we no doubt flattered ourselves—of the leading Powers of Europe. I could not help regretting the absence of a philosopher, in order that he might have studied the various characteristics of the nations.

I had become thoroughly worn-out long before the train reached its destination, and felt too tired and ill even to be glad when the train steamed into Strasburg. But a night's rest at the "Maison Rouge" found me, the next morning, refreshed in body, if worse in the influenza department. Therefore I sallied forth, determined not to give in to the enemy. My first visit was to a chemist. "Monsieur is, doubtless, an Englishman," he remarked, after a few minutes' talk, professional and other.

"How do you tell that?" I returned, hardly knowing whether to be flattered or angry.

"Not from monsieur's accent, assuredly," he replied, with a bow.

"That is perfect. Monsieur has, I am convinced, been bred, if not born, in France. But, in your present state of health, a Frenchman would be up to his eyes in blankets and tisané. *Que les Anglais sont hardis!*" he added, with a shrug of his shoulders.

At this moment a church-clock struck out the hour, and reminded me that, though an invalid, I was also a sight-seeing pilgrim. A few steps brought me opposite the cathedral. I stood before it, with awe. So this was the wonderful old building! Almost all things of renown have disappointed us when at length we have stood face to face with the reality. But here was no disappointment. I stood long gazing at the marvellous structure; the splendid carving and finish of the great centre doorway; the beautiful rose window above it; the harmony of the whole façade, in which, notwithstanding the absent spire, there was such perfect completeness. I wondered how it could chance that so glorious an edifice had for ages been left unfinished. The right tower and spire were there, the left were wanting, and, I suppose, will remain so, until spires, and cathedrals, and the glory of man, and Time itself, shall be no more:

"And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind."

I gazed long upon it, and slowly walked round and round, and noticed that it was marvellous throughout. Some portions of its carving and fretwork seemed so delicate that it could not remain ten years, yet for centuries it has stood the ravages of time, and may stand them for centuries to come. The interior of the building also gave no room for disappointment. I have not seen all the cathedrals of the world by very many, but I doubt if I shall ever see one that will take as much hold upon my mind as did that of Strasburg. The fluted pillars, the vaulted roof, the high, large windows, the lofty flight of steps ascending to the choir, the east window beyond all, lost, as it were, in the distance, contributed to an effect that rendered me speechless. I stood and wondered if Solomon's Temple could have exceeded this in grandeur. Long before my thoughts were in this world again, there came looming round, the vision of a huge being, resembling a walking mountain, clad in the long flowing robes of a beadle, and bearing in his hand a wand of office. This vision slowly bore down, and rudely broke in upon my reverie. We know what it is to be suddenly awakened from some delicious dream; we have all experienced the effect of No when longing earnestly for Yes (I do not refer to the great Yes or No of life); but these similes are powerless to describe my vexation when a voice, in correspondence with the size of the figure, startled the majesty of the silence, and demanded if I would see the crypt. Such a questioner had but to order and be obeyed. Having made the round of the cathedral, we presently returned to our starting-point, which happened to be in front of the organ—a magnificent instrument, placed high up, nearer the entrance

than the choir. "I should very much like to go there," I remarked. "Do you think I might be allowed to try the organ?"

"Impossible, monsieur," replied the guide. "Strangers are never admitted into the organ-loft. As to touching the instrument——"

The idea seemed too wild to admit of expression, and he was silent. "Perhaps strangers have never sought admission?" I continued.

"They know it would be useless," was the answer. "There goes the organist," he observed, pointing out a noble-looking old man, with white flowing hair, who was making for the entrance to the organ-loft.

Without a word of warning I darted from the guide, and caught up the organist as he was about to disappear. "Monsieur," I said, "will you, as a great favour, allow me to see the organ?"

He looked at me for a moment, but I knew from his benevolent face, in which I could trace the evidence of a pure life, that he would not refuse the request.

"It is against the rules," he remarked, after a moment's hesitation; "but follow me."

We slowly ascended the narrow staircase and he paused once, for, as I have said, he was no longer young. At last we stood before the organ, and I almost trembled with expectation as he took his seat. Ere many moments a few quiet chords went stealing through the building; then he gradually increased the sound, until at last volumes of music went rolling and swelling through the arches in a continuous stream; roll after roll, chord upon chord; driven hither and thither, as might be some white mist in a whirlwind: until at last I was fain to hide my face in my hands; to shut out the world; all my senses but that of hearing; to let the wondrous music speak to my soul with an utterance no other earthly power can possess. Then, having showed me the greatness of the organ, he taught me its softness and sweetness; and waves of melody went floating through the air until their many echoes died away in the far distance. Oh, it was glorious; it was unearthly; with such an influence continually upon us we should soon cease to be the poor, weak, wavering mortals we for the most part prove ourselves. When I turned to the organist, a few moments after he had ceased, he was looking at me earnestly.

"You love music?" he said.

"With my whole heart and soul."

"Ay," he replied, taking both my hands in his, "I know it; I knew it when I first saw you. Therefore you and I love each other. By this influence I, an old man, and you, a young one, are brought within the same sympathies; we have the same thoughts and feelings; the same spiritual impressions; the same sense of right and wrong; and I trust the same power to keep us pure and upright. I have now frequented this organ-loft for sixty years. The edifice is unchanged: it seems to be eternal: I alone have not stood still. I am about to begin life, and to

enter upon my immortality. When this building, and all these things shall have passed away, you and I, friend, will, through the mercy of God, have become eternal. And then, and not till then, will the strange yearnings and cravings of our souls be satisfied."

We came down together, and I bid farewell to my friend—for I must call him friend—with sober and solemn thoughts.

It was upon the stroke of twelve, and I went across to the wonderful clock. But though a marvel to strangers it has ceased to be so to the inhabitants of the place, and the crowd assembled was a very limited one. As it struck the hour the machinery set itself in motion. A figure of Father Time made good use of his scythe; with each stroke of the clock an apostle passed before a stationary figure, representing our Saviour: at the strokes of four and eight a large golden cock flapped its wings and crowed—in remembrance of Peter's denial. A figure, seated in a species of triumphal car, represented the day of the week; the day gone by just disappearing, the new day making itself visible. A dial showing the age of the moon; others giving the time in various parts of the world, and one representing, I think, the world's age. The inventor was forty years in constructing it, and then died.

I passed out of the cathedral and went into the small Protestant church, remarkable for the tomb of Marshal Saxe, a wonderful piece of sculpture, and for two well-preserved mummies of celebrated beings, whose names I have forgotten. I have little to say about the town; towns for the most part seem to resemble each other. Many of the streets were new and modern, and only a portion of it bore traces of its antiquity. It was a curious sight to see the large washing establishments on the river—much more curious and out of place, somehow, than those in Paris. Another strange but beautiful sight was a number of nests built by storks on high chimneys and gables; the birds, resting sedately and with much dignity, stood out in bold relief against the sky, and might in some cases have been almost mistaken for a vision in it.

Baden-Baden was decided on as my next destination, and accordingly, one fine morning, I bid Strasburg adieu. There is nothing to relate concerning the journey, except that at one place, where our luggage was to be examined, I omitted to clear mine, and it was left behind. Baden-Baden was reached in safety. "You will find my luggage in the van," I remarked to a porter, giving him a card as a guide to the name. "I do not intend to remain here many days, and have all I want in this bag. I shall be glad to leave the other with you." I went off, thinking all was right. It was, of course, out of the season, and Baden Baden was empty. Still there was an omnibus at the station, that I entered, and desired to be put down at an hotel to which I had been recommended; the "*Bad und Gasthof zum Hirsch*." I found it comfortable; the landlord, a well-informed and obliging

man. He sympathized with me in the extremity of my cold—for this seemed to get worse instead of better—and at night brought me up a carafe of mineral water, containing about a quart of the liquid, which, with real fatherly kindness, he insisted upon my draining to the dregs. "To-morrow you will be quite well," he said, by way of consolation, and I tried to believe him; but the morrow found me no better. However, the morning being fine, I went forth for a walk to the old castle, of world-wide fame. Passing through the small narrow streets of the town, I came out upon a most lovely country. The ruins might be seen in the distance, on the summit of a high hill—I had almost said mountain. The ascent soon began. It was a complete forest—one of the most beautiful spots in the world: just the place for a pic-nic, I could not help thinking; with no end of shady walks in which couples might wander away and sentimentalize, and make love, and discover the wonderful similarity existing in each other's minds. In short, just the spot, as was before remarked, to bring forth the great Yes or No of life. The top seemed a long way off, but was reached at last, and the scene that burst upon me will not be easily forgotten. It was of great extent, if not very varied. Down in the valley lay the town, in a nutshell, the stream looking like a small silver thread, sparkling in the sunshine. In the distance chains of hills bounded the horizon, all covered with woods, though too far off for the trees to be seen. I seemed to be looking down on the whole world; a very quiet and retired world, for I stood alone, in solitary grandeur. The ruins were ruins indeed, but worthy their fame. Having reached the top in a white heat, I remained until I began to cool down, and then thought it time to retrace my steps. Accordingly, after a last look from the very highest pinnacle to be attained, I slowly worked my way back to the town.

I did not stay long in Baden Baden. There were no signs of life in the place; the very dogs and cats walked about the streets with a processional pace and gait; and it may be that the influenza made me restless. So I bid my kind landlord adieu, having settled his really moderate claims, and started off for Heidelberg.

Arrived at the Baden station, I found, to my infinite vexation, that my luggage was not forthcoming. "Had it been cleared at the frontier town?" "No." "Then of course it was lying there, at the station, and I must return in search of it." This I objected to, and asked if it would do equally well to send back my keys by a guard. This suggestion was finally adopted, and whilst the keys went off on their voyage of discovery, I continued my journey to Heidelberg.

Here I found much more life stirring. I went to the Hotel Schrieder, and was given a capital room opposite the great hills. Having carefully deposited the only precious remnant of my luggage, I went off in search of a friend—a Frenchman, whose acquaintance I had made in Paris—who had been exiled from France for a certain number of years, for

reasons so absurd and chimerical, that they might tell a tale against those in power were they to be recorded. He was a noble man in the strict sense of the term, and, I know, felt his banishment keenly, in spite of his endeavours to persuade every one, including himself, that nothing better could have happened to him. I shall never forget his surprise at my appearance. I thought he would have taken me in his arms, so delighted was he to see anything that reminded him of Paris. It proved where his heart was more plainly than all his protestations went to show the contrary.

The next day was Sunday. We walked through the town together, which consists, for the most part, of one long, straight street, neither very handsome nor very clean. We strolled about the hills until church-time, when we separated, and he went home. After service—which was attended by only a handful of English—we walked up to the ruins of the castle—some of the largest and grandest in the world. The view, though not so extensive, was more varied and still more beautiful than that from the castle at Baden Baden. The hills, opposite and around us, were full of majesty; those near the town bore a strong resemblance to our own noble hills at Malvern, though far more romantic. The Necker, with its old bridge, to which so many legends are attached, contributed not a little to the beauty of the scene. Unfortunately it was not warm summer weather, and there were no rich clusters of grapes in the vineyards on the opposite hills. The town, even on Sunday, was noisy with students—indeed, Sunday is their chief holiday, and the day on which the theatres are most frequented. Many of the students bore signs of their fiery temperaments, for their faces were scarred and gashed—the fruits of duels and street-fights. About four o'clock I went down to the station, and there, to my satisfaction, found keys and the missing luggage. How I inwardly thanked that guard! In the evening I went up to the cemetery, which is beautifully situated on a hill a little distance from the town. I found the people on the road civil and inclined to be friendly, answering all questions with an intelligence and readiness not to be met with amongst the English of the same class. And thus ended my first day in Heidelberg.

I could say much more about Heidelberg, but, as I warned you at starting, this is but a sketch. I enjoyed my stay there and left with regret. Respecting my next destination, there is a good deal to be recorded, but space forbids that it be entered upon now. Perhaps I may some day give you the conclusion of my journey.

THE PLAY-FELLOWS.

Translated from the German.

A BOY sat on the sea-shore, near the town of Genoa, one May-day in 1793. He was gazing fixedly across the broad glittering expanse of water at his feet. He was about ten years old, with a slight figure, delicate pale face, dark hair, heavy eyebrows, and most marvellous black eyes : from their rapid changes, they had an almost weird expression—at one moment fiery and proud, the next sorrowful unto death.

A clear, sweet, childish voice broke in on the young dreamer's meditations, as a lovely little girl ran up, and cried, "Naughty Niccolo ! where have you been ? I looked for you everywhere the whole afternoon !" Here she kissed him and scattered a quantity of roses, myrtle, and orange blossoms over him, out of her little white apron.

Niccolo threw his arm round the chatterer, and, stroking her wild locks, said gently, "I slipped away from father, Gianetta, for I wanted to be happy, and sit and dream here on the still sea-shore ; you know it is your play-fellow's favourite spot." Instead of answering, Gianetta began to scold her young friend's father. "He gives you no peace by day or night," she exclaimed. "He will bring you to an early grave, for my mother always says, 'Your Niccolo is not a strong boy ; that crazy fiddle wears away his spirit, and the father will ruin his body.'"

"Don't believe it," returned Niccolo, earnestly. "I shall not die—I cannot, until I have become a great man ; and I am not weak, for look here !" and rising up, his figure seemed to expand, his eyes burned with a wild fire, and a strange smile played around his mouth as he raised Gianetta, and held her over the glassy water at his feet. The girl did not tremble as he put her down again, but looked at him timidly. She soon began her pretty prattle, while Niccolo listened patiently to many childish plans and stories about her flowers and pigeons. Sometimes he would sink into a reverie, but a kiss from Gianetta, or the caress of her soft little hand, would rouse him, when she would look indescribably happy in her innocent delight. Later, when it grew dark, they went home hand-in-hand, through many broad thoroughfares, until they turned off into a side-street, at the end of which stood two houses thickly covered with vines, and in one of these lived Gianetta, opposite to Niccolo. A father's hard, stern, countenance awaited the boy, but Gianetta's mother stood anxiously watching at her door, and kissed her little girl tenderly ; then both children said good night and parted.

As Niccolo with a heavy sigh entered his lonely chamber, he opened the window to let in the delicious evening air, then took an old violin out of a coffin-like case, and began to improvise. The pure, strangely attractive tones gushed out into the silent night, or rose and swelled in the narrow room, seeming to make the walls vibrate with their thrilling sounds. Scarcely had the first note died away, when from the thick vine, growing up the window, out crept an unusually large and beautifully marked cross-spider. "Welcome, little Silver Cross," said Niccolo, softly, and laid his hand on the window-sill; the spider ran up at once, and was placed by the boy on the neck of his violin, where she clung fast with her little feet, and remained there motionless, listening to the sea of sound which swept over and around her. The boy played until his arm ached, then laying down his violin, he carried the spider back to the window, while she moved about between his fingers as if to thank him, and then slipped in amongst the vine-leaves. As he followed her with his eyes a feeling of inconsolable loneliness came over him, which overpowered him every night when little "Silver Cross," the strange listener and companion of his melancholy childhood, had left him.

Niccolo clung with tender affection to this little creature. The first note of his violin called her out, and not until the last sound ceased did she awake out of the sweet stupefaction into which those magic strains had plunged her.

Often when Niccolo, while sunk in meditation, dreamed of the fulfilment of his ambitious aspirations, little "Silver Cross" would come creeping up so softly, that the movement seemed to him like a light kiss; and then he closed his eyes, and forgot the loneliness, and that nobody cared for him. The father was his stern master; his gentle mother was dead; and the boys of his own age avoided him with a strange kind of shyness: only Gianetta played with him and kissed him; so Niccolo's heart was divided between the affectionate girl and his strange little window-friend. But Gianetta could not bear spiders, and said, timidly, "They are witches;" therefore, whenever the child was with him—listening breathlessly to his marvellous playing—Niccolo never put "Silver Cross" on his violin; and soon the spider seemed to understand that, and did not appear when Gianetta was there; but if Niccolo drew near the window with his instrument, and peeped out secretly, there he saw the mute listener hanging motionless on a vine-leaf.

Gianetta was never content when his arm sank wearily, and the sounds were hushed, but he must then tell her stories, wild, fanciful legends, as well as the dreams and aspiring plans of his own burning heart. When he told her about the celebrated German, Maestro Mozart, and how he had written long concertos in his sixth year, and was a star in the musical heavens, his cheeks would burn, and tears of excitement

and mortification would burst from his eyes. "You see, Gianetta," he would say, with a bitter smile, "what a wretched bungler I am compared with him!"

One day—under his father's direction, and in a state of inward torture—he had been playing the most monotonous exercises. His hands were powerless, his forehead glowed, and all strength, all the life of his body, seemed to have gone into his eyes, they glittered so wonderfully; when suddenly he heard Gianetta's mother calling him, in a piteous voice. He hastened to see her, and found the child seized with violent fever. She looked at *him*, her dearest play-fellow, with an imploring glance; he understood it, and brought his violin, while his heart was ready to burst.

"A slumber-song for you, Gianetta!" cried he. She smiled, and then the boy's magical fiddle sang the sweetest, strangest, most charming of all slumber-songs. When he had ended, Gianetta whispered softly: "Thanks, dearest Niccolo; I am going to sleep sweetly, but *you* may not need rest yet; you must give light on earth, like a bright, beaming star! Go far, far away from here, and think of me and of my words!" Here the lovely child sank her head with a gentle sigh—and died.

Niccolo would not stir from the loved body all night long. On returning late in the evening, his quiet, dark room filled him with a thrill of horror. From the window he could see into Gianetta's little chamber opposite; tapers were lighted there, and the child lay on the bier with her angelic countenance decorated and almost buried in flowers. "Farewell, sweet-heart!" murmured the weeping boy, "I am going away—as far away as I can. There is nothing now to keep me, desolate and unloved as I am!" Here he sank on his knees and sobbed convulsively. But at that moment he felt a strange, soft touch on his hand, and he started. It was little "Silver Cross." "Is that you, mute, and alas! now sole companion of my life?" cried Niccolo, as a ray almost of joy stole over his countenance, and he glanced thoughtfully at the little creature.

At last he rose up: "One last farewell greeting to Gianetta, and then away into the world with *you*, only mighty, heavenly, loved one of my heart," cried he, pressing his violin to him. And then he made the strings sing more wonderfully, more entrancingly than ever.

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As the morning sun looked into the little room, he found an almost senseless boy lying on the ground, his violin clasped in his arms, and on the strings of it hung little "Silver Cross"—dead! Did Gianetta's loving prediction ever come true?

The boy's name was *Niccolo Paganini*.